

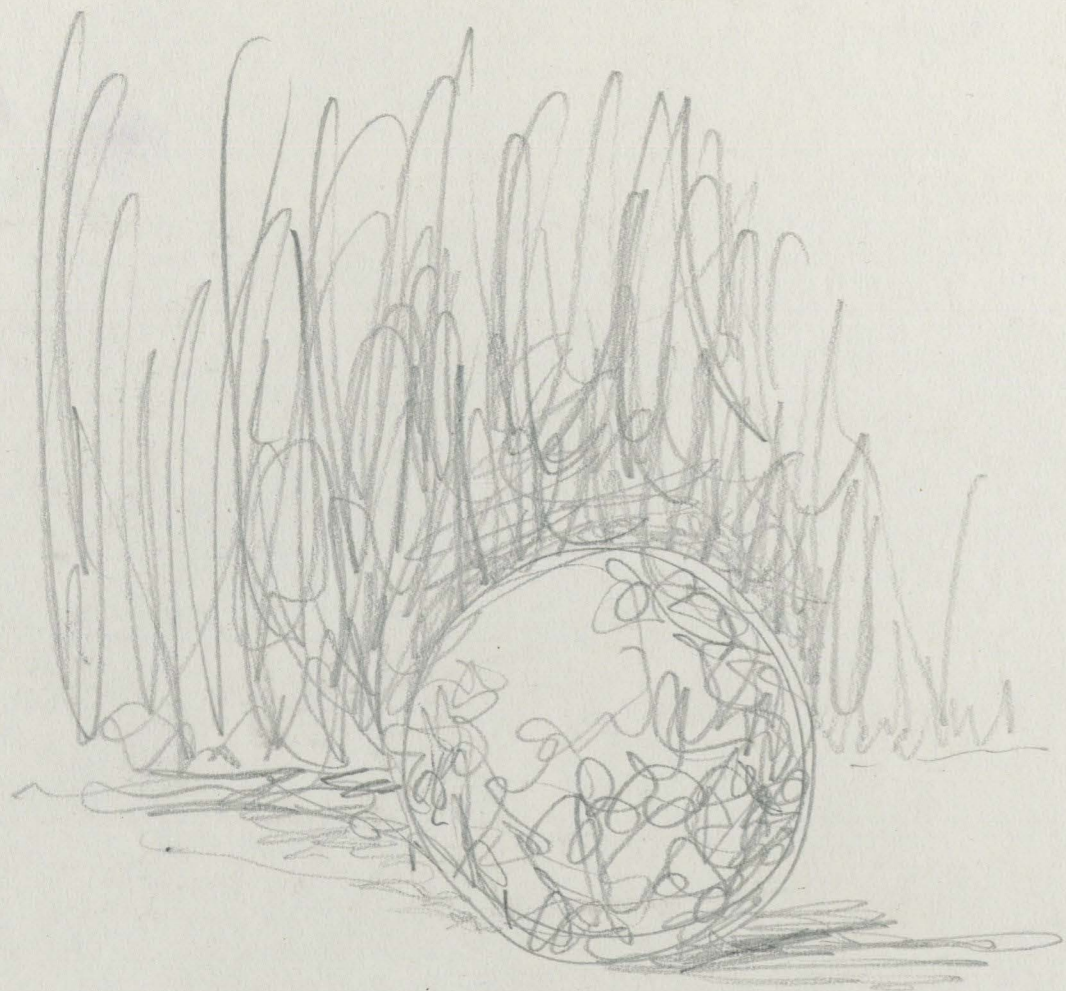
A sketchbook kept by the artist Garry Barker during the year 2019. This 80 page sketchbook was used to generate ideas, record visits to museums, work out ideas for three dimensional structures and to tap into the artist's subconscious and to trawl for emerging images.

The artist's response to the grey paper was to use white oil pastel as a way to foster thoughts about tonality and form. Pencil is then used alongside coloured crayons to clarify the forms arriving.

Some of the ideas in this sketchbook are still being mined in 2024, 5 years after the actual making of the drawings.

If I don't return to.

BACKFST



Strathmore

More notes on paper
for blog.

Stephen Farthing on water
to add notes part to keep
water drawing going.

Add a link to
communication theory to the
post follows Pioneer
10.

The inside cover of an A4 Strathmore sketchbook, that contains a good quality smooth grey paper. The scribbled drawing on the left is a note about tonality and how to use it to create three-dimensional effect, this was probably drawn to show someone how important this was, especially as the sketchbook's grey paper encouraged the making of tonal images that were more three dimensional in effect.

There is also a reference to Stephen Farthing and the fact that I was making a blog post; my blog on drawing was something I was keeping going and still do, trying to post at least once a week. Farthing is a very well respected authority on drawing and I was probably going to put up a post that mentioned his work.

The Pioneer 10 note relates to a blog post on communication theory.

<https://fineartdrawinglca.blogspot.com/2019/02/drawing-and-communication-theory.html>

This helps me to date the sketchbook's first use which would be in 2019. The issue about sketchbooks and dates is that there are the dates of its making, and the dates of its use as a driver of new work. This particular sketchbook is still in use, as several of the ideas that began to emerge, are still being revisited and worked back into.



The opening image in this sketchbook, as is often the case, is a drawing made from an idea that was past its sell by date. I had been making images of mice and rats, but they were going nowhere and this new grey paper sketchbook gave me an opportunity to try out a drawing on a different paper stock, to see if that might help take the idea any further. It didn't and the idea was shelved.

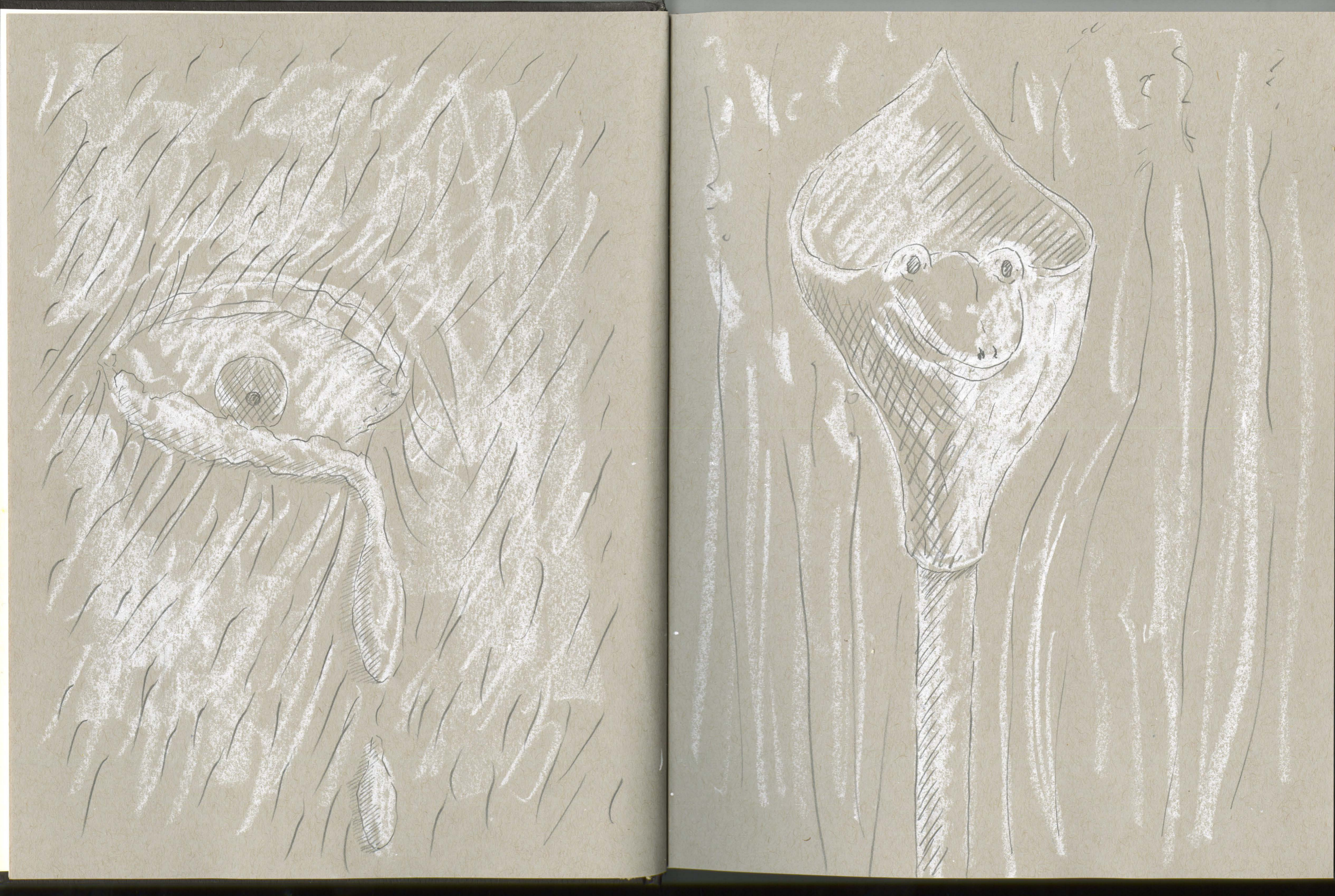
I had been thinking about cages and how marks on a paper surface indicating space, could at the same time be cages. This aspect of my thinking would continue and there are several examples of this cage/spatial indicator mark making issue to be found in this sketchbook.

The observational drawings I had been making at the same time, were centred on the problem of depicting space and energy and the establishing of front and back space marks, was being done by what I thought of at the time as 'rain' marks. I.e. I was trying to 'see' spaces as if rain was falling into them and as it did, it became at the same time, a space filler and definer.



Very rough ideas about hybrid creatures, the mouse is fading out and fish forms are arriving.

I never did make a mouse/fish, but I was becoming interested in the possibilities that white oil pastel on grey paper offered.

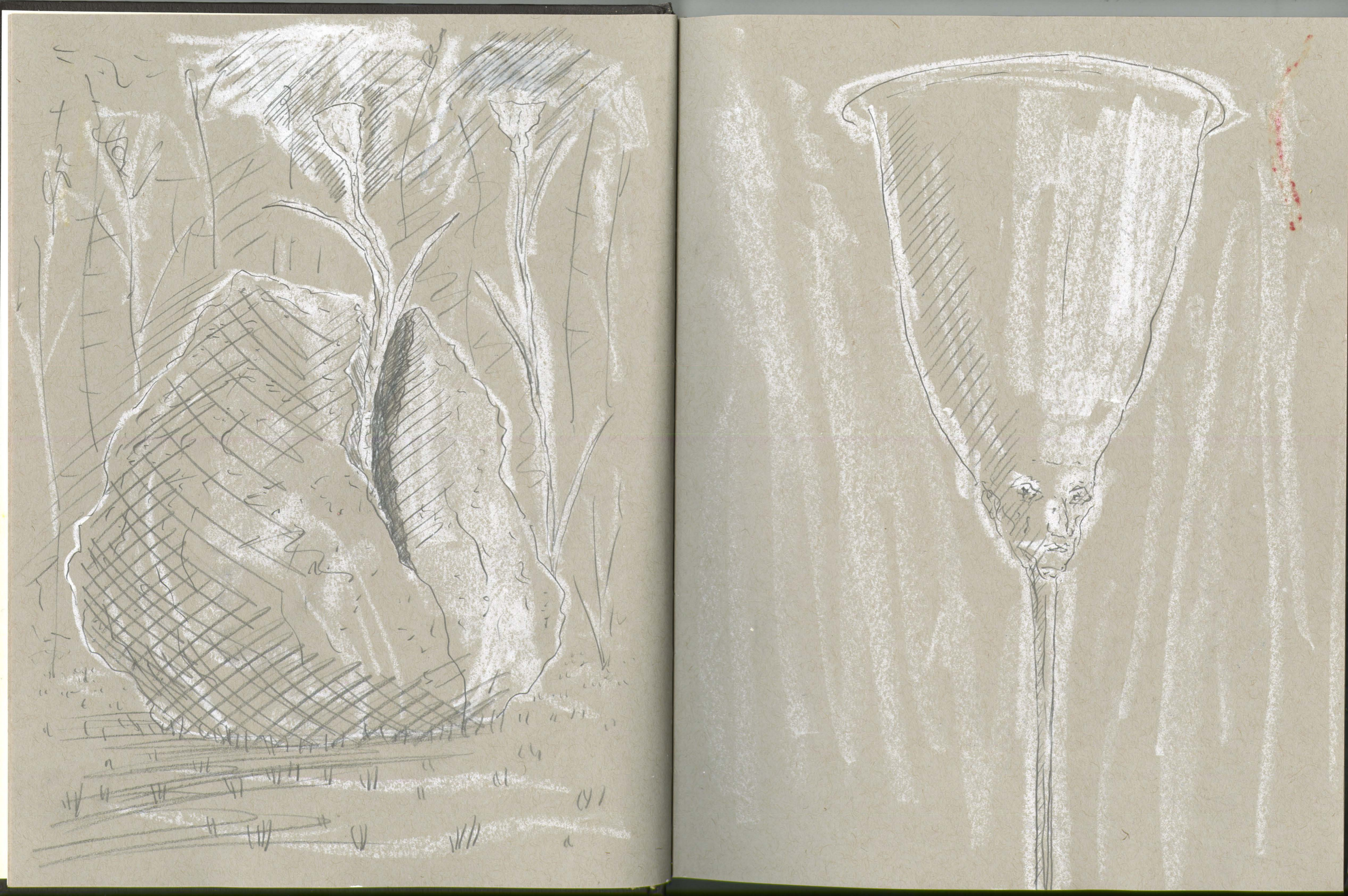


A crying eye and a lily/frog.

Perhaps it was the attempt to draw rain that led to an eye crying, I can't remember, but the lily / frog form was one of the first ideas to emerge for ceramic objects that could be situated in the grounds of the Patchings sculpture trail in Nottingham.

My idea was to develop a memorial for those lost at sea as they attempted to cross the Mediterranean.

Crying is something I would return to.



On the left, new life growing from cracks in rocks and at the same time on the right, a plant being used as a symbol for remembrance. Plants are central to our understanding of life and death, their cyclical lives reminding us that there is always death in life and life in death.

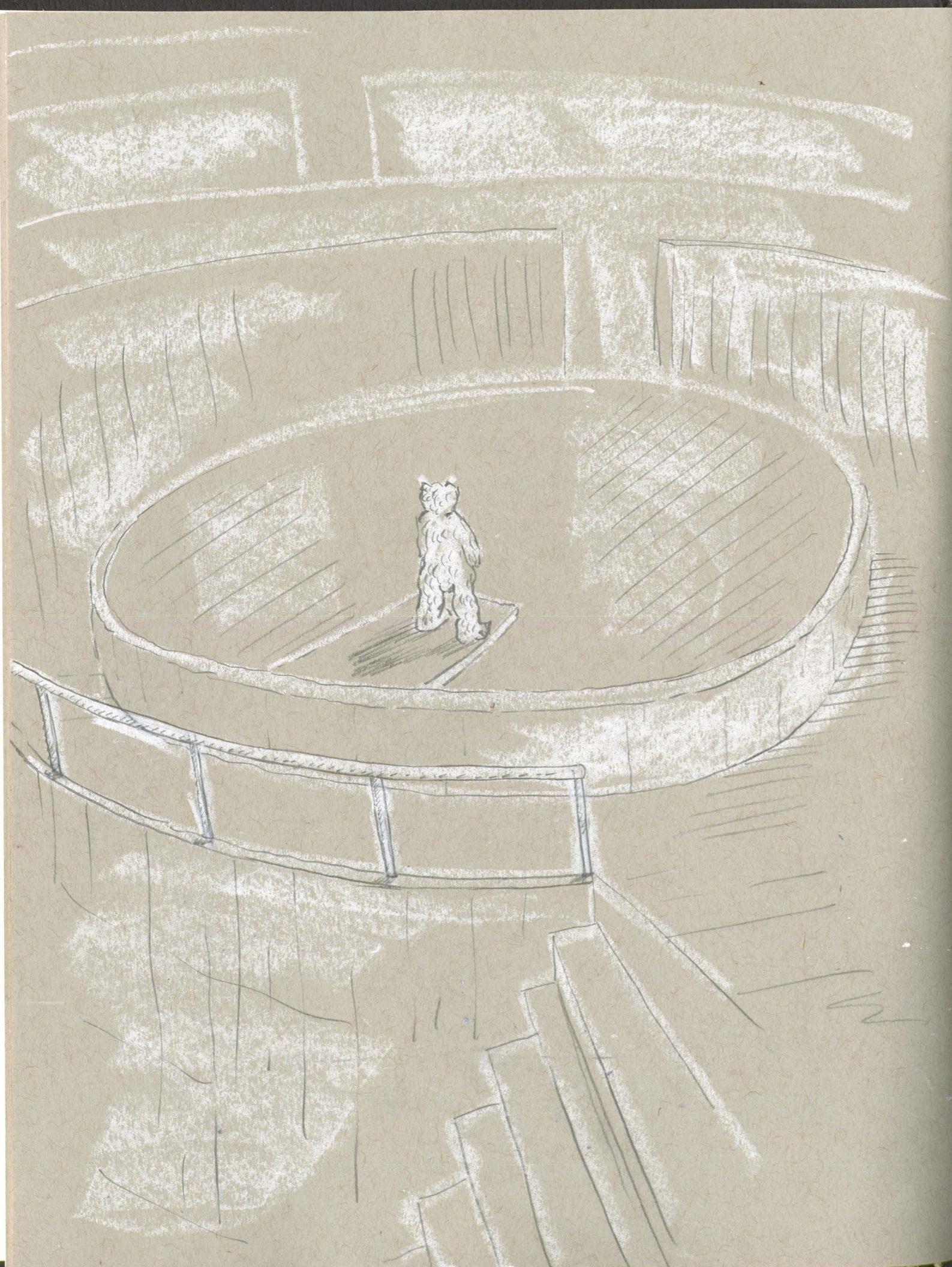
The head / flowerhead form was perhaps too obvious, but as an idea emerges sometimes I have to state the obvious, before then pushing it into the background.

The flower as part of the vanitas tradition is something that works so well because we still live amongst them and they are always dying and coming back into flower the next year. Some analogies still work and if they do I see no reason to not use them.



A couple of years before the drawing on the left was made, I had been making hundreds of ceramic fish that were finally destined to become part of a permanently sited installation in Barnsley set into the side of a small stream in the grounds of Cannon Hall. My thoughts in relation to this were captured in a blog post, see: <https://fineartdrawinglca.blogspot.com/2017/06/garry-barker-exhibition.html> However ideas will often re-emerge and in this case I had been thinking about resuscitation, I had at one time been a first aider and you are trained in mouth to mouth resuscitation. The fish to be resuscitated somehow needed lips and in having them became more human. This morphing between human and animal/plant forms was important as it was the beginning of what I now think of as an animist approach to my thinking.

On the right an animal cries out, a memory of Dudley Zoo, one of my childhood playing grounds and a place that has engrained itself into my psyche. Its modernist concrete arenas for the display of animals, in particular the polar bears, still inhabit my dream spaces and force me to confront something deeply troubling about humans.



The drawing on the left is about my feelings about the lonely polar bear having to stand in that 1950s Dudley Zoo modernist arena. The bear is also at the same time my Sooty puppet, a toy given to me as a boy and which I took with me everywhere, until it became a sort of conduit between myself and the rest of the world. Gradually Sooty would become larger and larger in my imagination, until for a while as an image it took over all my work and then faded back into the background.

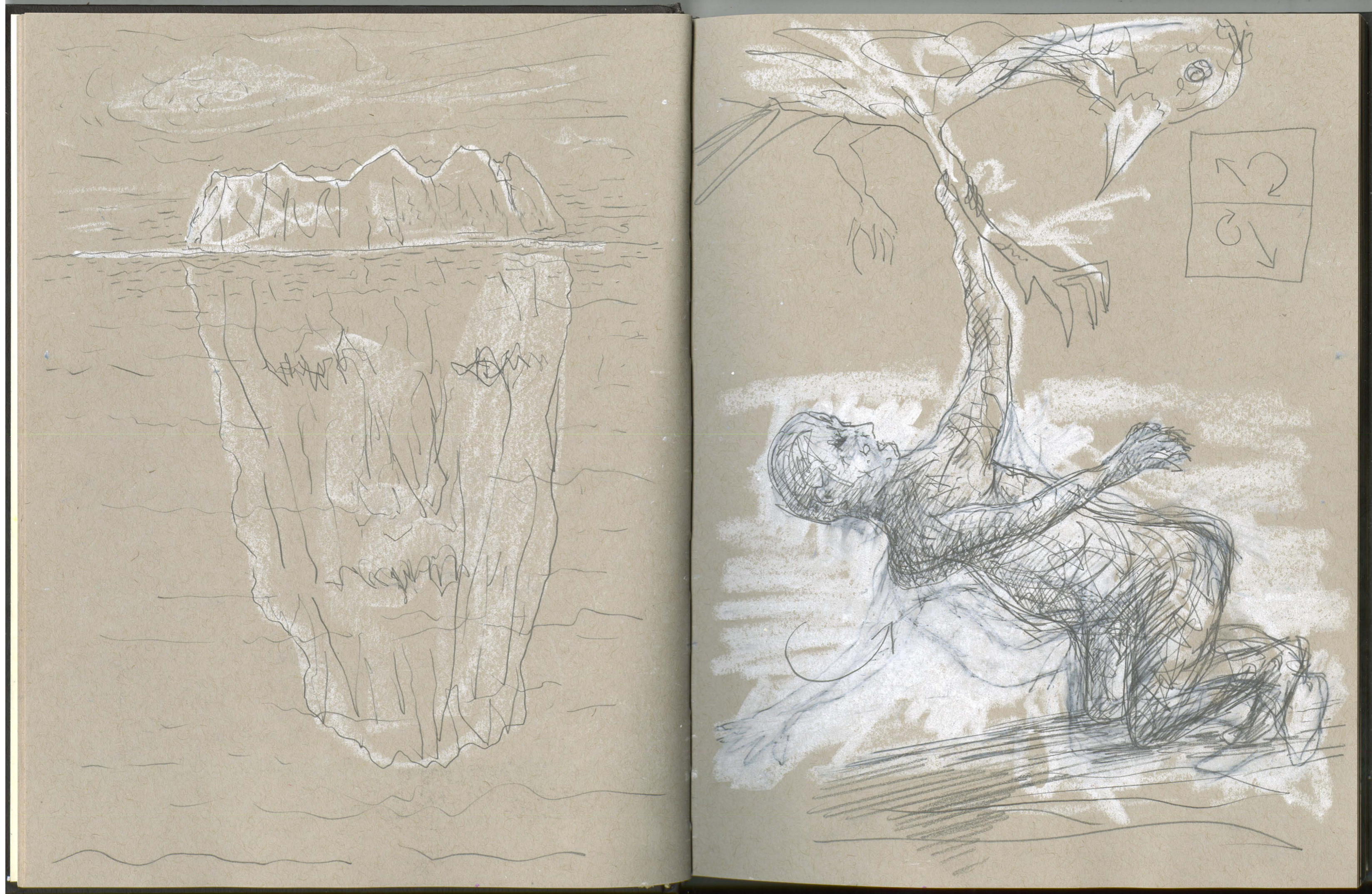
The image on the right is of an unformed creature, something struggling to become something, a feeling I often have, whereby I am confused as to what I am and how I should be communicating, especially when having to hold day to day conversations with people. It is easier for me to draw and then afterwards write down what the drawings were about, than to make direct communication with people. My mode of thinking is triggered by my hand perhaps more than my mouth.



On the left a hand tries to grasp or hold on to a small thing. It is my hand's movement that helps me to understand what is happening, often more so than my mind. I am though clumsy and my own fingers are arthritic and not as mobile or strong as they used to be.

The tiny thing held in the hand is a seed, something to plant and grow.

On the right a drawing of a flower head, that was less encumbered with anything else, such as my attempting to make it more than it needed to be and in its simplicity I was beginning to see what I wanted to do when making a ceramic memorial piece.



A thought about icebergs and the fact that what we see is a tiny part of what is there. Many people have used the analogy as a representation of the unconscious, in that what we experience of people as their conscious selves, is actually just the tip of the iceberg and that masses of ice lie beneath the surface. I liked the fact that the visible tip was beginning to look like a hat or crown, something about personality or status being conveyed by what we wear.

The right-hand image of a man trying to hold on to the leg of a bird was about the need to find something to elevate us, to help us fly, but at the same time as we find this we hold back or make unable to fly the very thing/person that we have found to help us. I eventually made an animation of this idea.

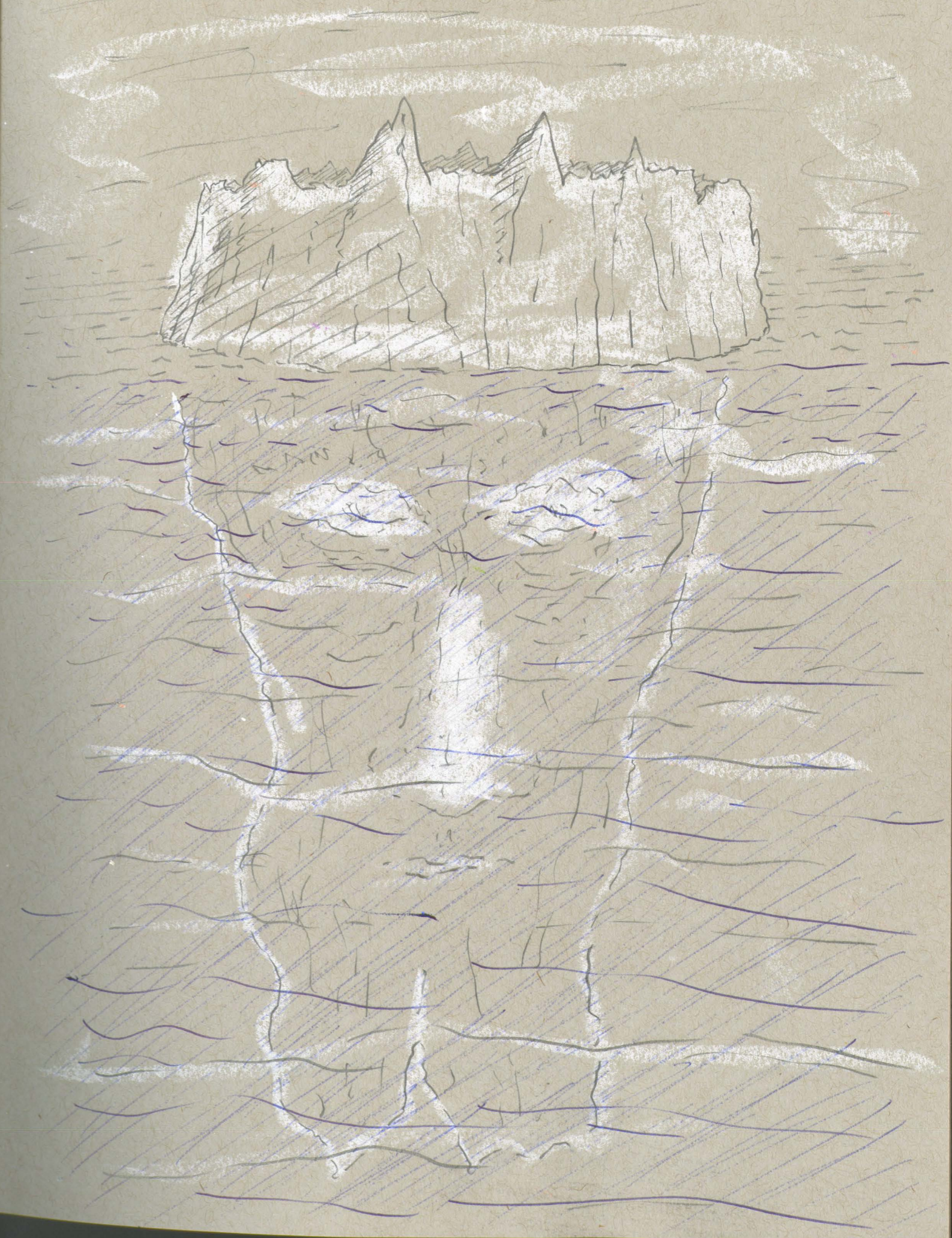
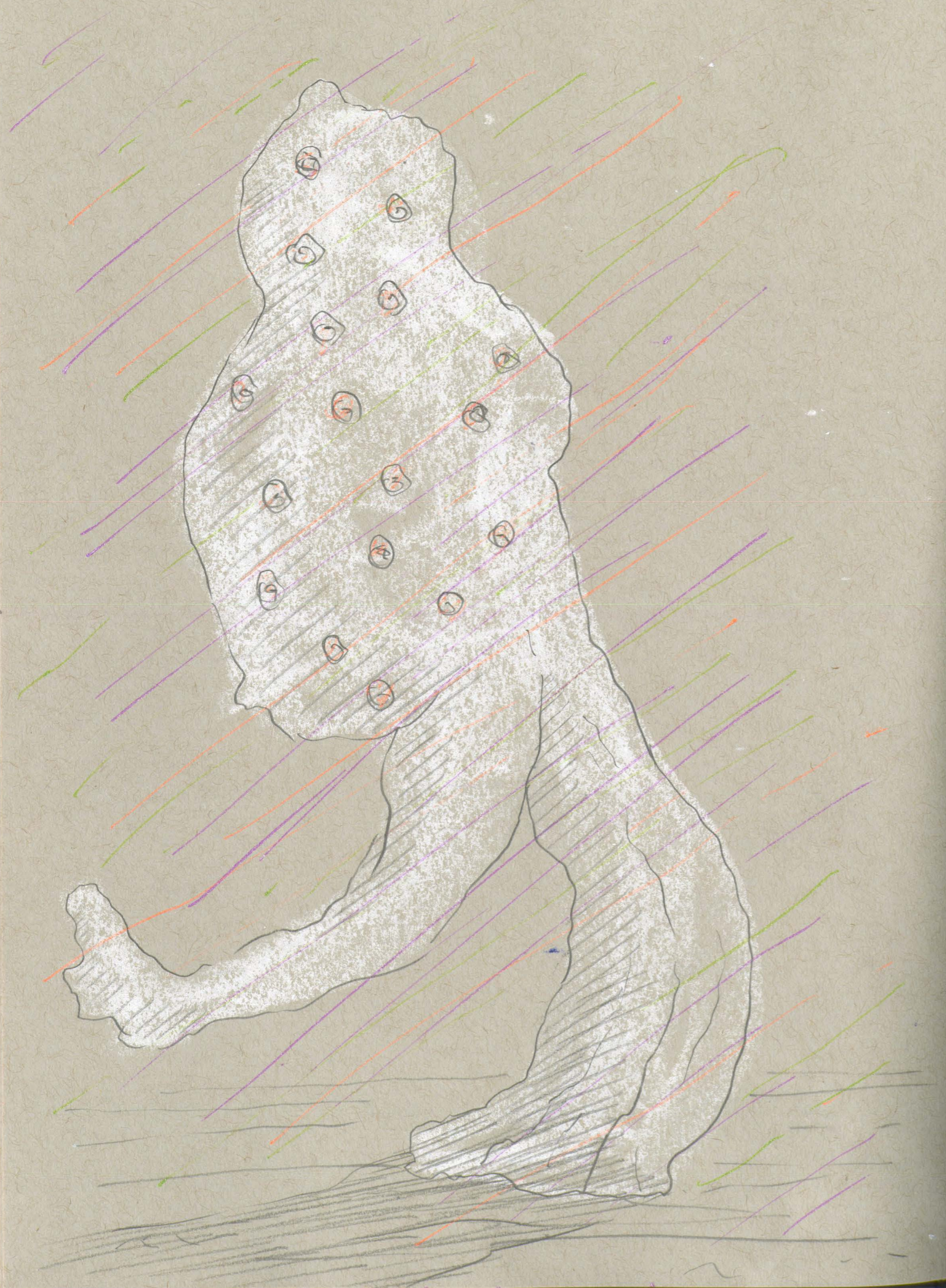
See:

<https://media3.giphy.com/media/3oz8xWyxiqvJ3ToIKs/giphy.webp>



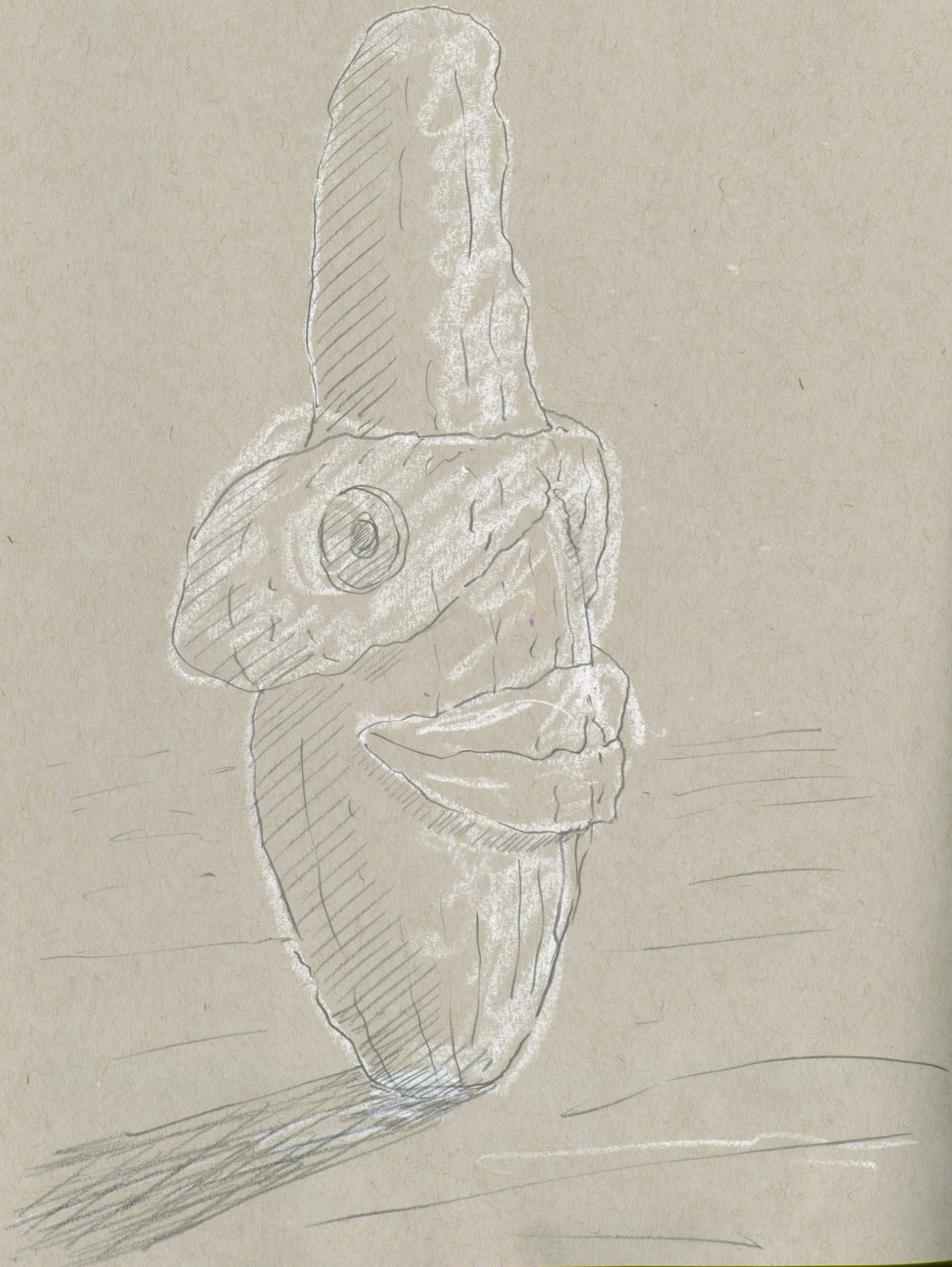
On the left a sort of fish / lifebuoy image, something that just arrived out of the drawing, a something that may make sense to me at some time, but which is as an image as yet something I haven't used.

On the right is an observational drawing of something brought into the house by a child. I found it fascinating and a thing of strangeness. For the child it was just a cheap something made of soft plastic and part of a menagerie of animal type creatures that they were playing with, that included model dinosaurs and jungle animals, but for myself it triggered feelings I associated with reading pulp science fiction stories during the 1960s, such as 'The Monsters' by Robert Sheckley. This is a story whereby a planet inhabited by sentient aliens that call themselves "humans," but that when described are reptilian, insect like hybrids, is visited by human explorers, who are to the planet's natives, hideous monsters. An idea that I have kept with me ever since, always reminding myself that to others we may well appear to be horrid creatures.



On the left another confused creature, something arriving out of the marks made, a form that is also channelling a series of images I once made that were responses to looking at frog spawn.

On the right I was drawing another thing seen under water, that iceberg image again, this time the visible ice becomes a crown.

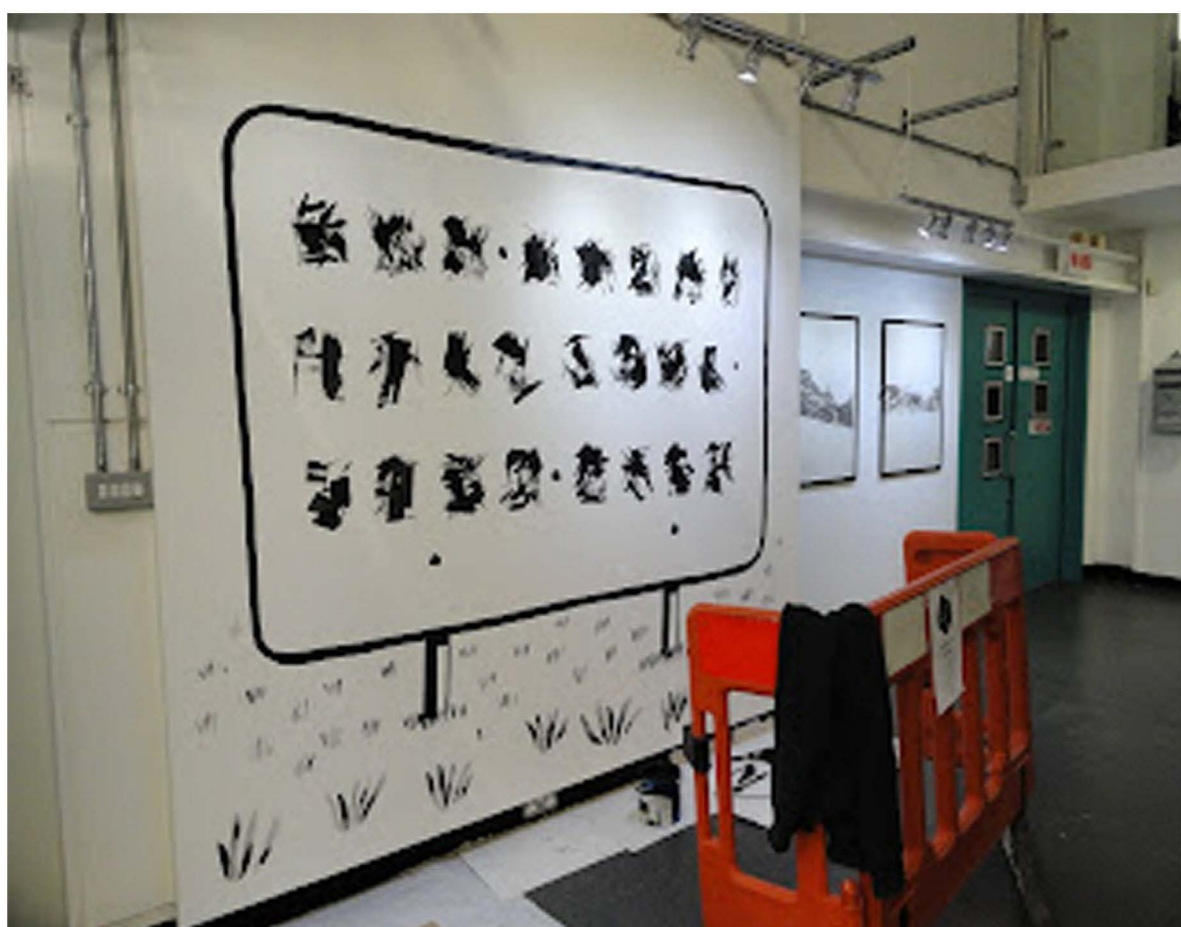


On the left a plant / human hybrid, a form that would be made in ceramics but which I found too 'comic book' but which now looked at from a distance of a few years, reminds me more of the Mr. Potato heads that we used to make as children.

The figure on the right is another hybrid, this time reflecting upon the fact that plant root tips can search out where to go as if they have eyes. A stamping along plant is of course 'Triffid' like and in its adoption of animal characteristics it becomes monstrous.



On the left a notice board with asemic writing. I was undertaking a project at the time that involved making notice boards that were unreadable signs. I draw them in as many ways as possible on lots of different surfaces, so the grey paper was just that, a difference surface.



On the right another bear image, one that again didn't go anywhere but which came out because it needed to.



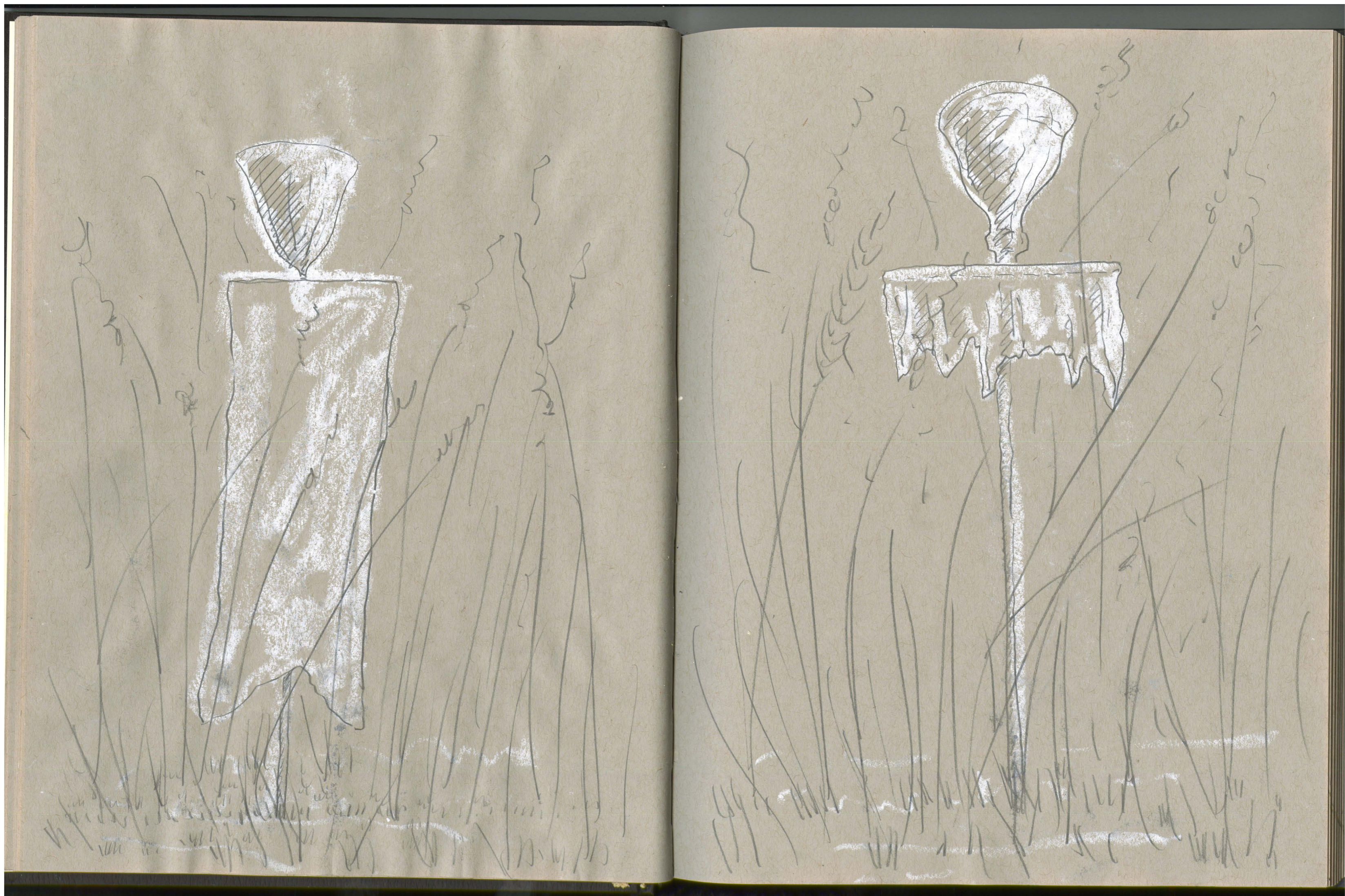
I was reflecting on the relationship between fields, (ploughed) and lines of text. Also in the back of my mind was the etymology of 'draw' to drag, like a plough.

The lined paper was for me a contemporary vision of a ploughed field.

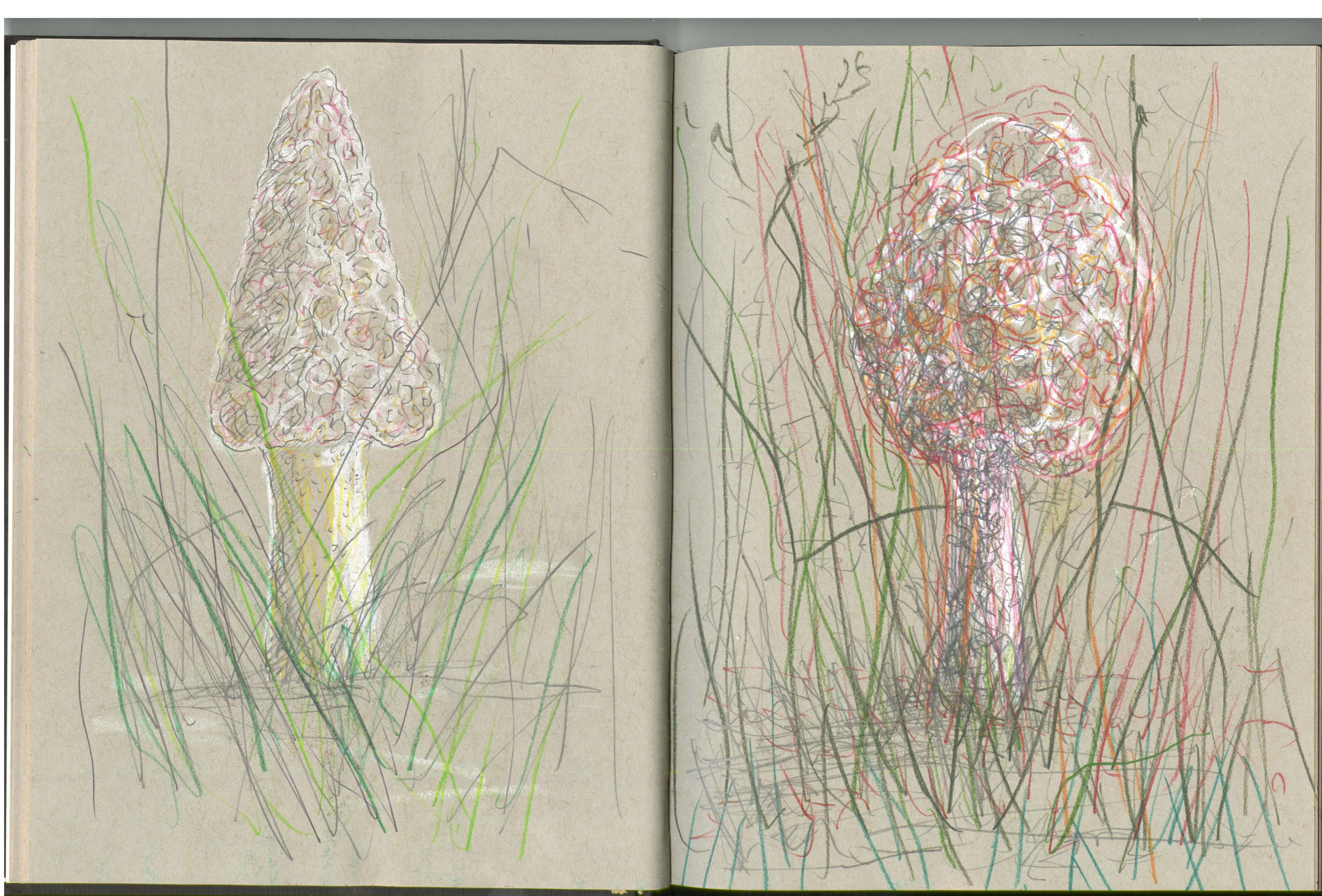


On the right another asemic text, marks that look like words or text, as if arriving in Japan or China and having to use the signage without any understanding of the language. Part of my worry about how verbal languages are only available to those who are taught to read them.

On the left a flower just shows a touch of colour, a small flower/head is also emerging. I was thinking about how little you need to put into an image to suggest something.



Two images where the flowerhead is being thought of as a memorial sign, in this case the images are meant to invoke a suggestion of an old scarecrow or left in the field battle standard. Probably the most important issue was that I had now decided that whatever it was I was going to do, it would be sited in long grass and would have to have an affinity with the surrounding plant life, as it would need to be there for several months, therefore look appropriate both in spring, summer and autumn.



I was thinking about other types of non-animal life, in this case fungi. Could I use these forms as memorial ones, fungi like flowers are living things that have a cyclical life, in that they fruit on a seasonal basis and appear to die off and then renew themselves.



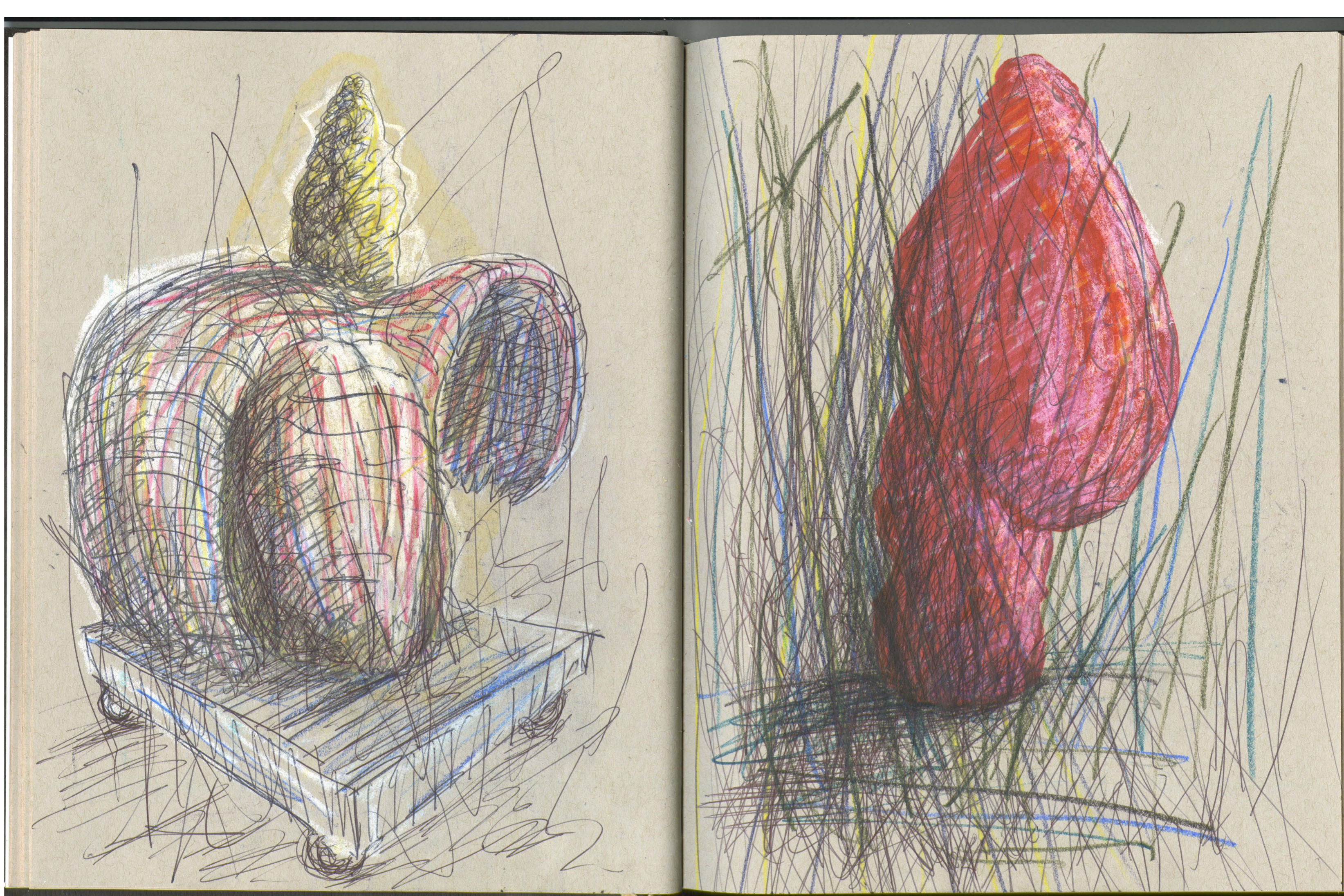
Plants and fungi becoming fused in my mind. Ideas related to the corpse lily, were beginning to emerge.



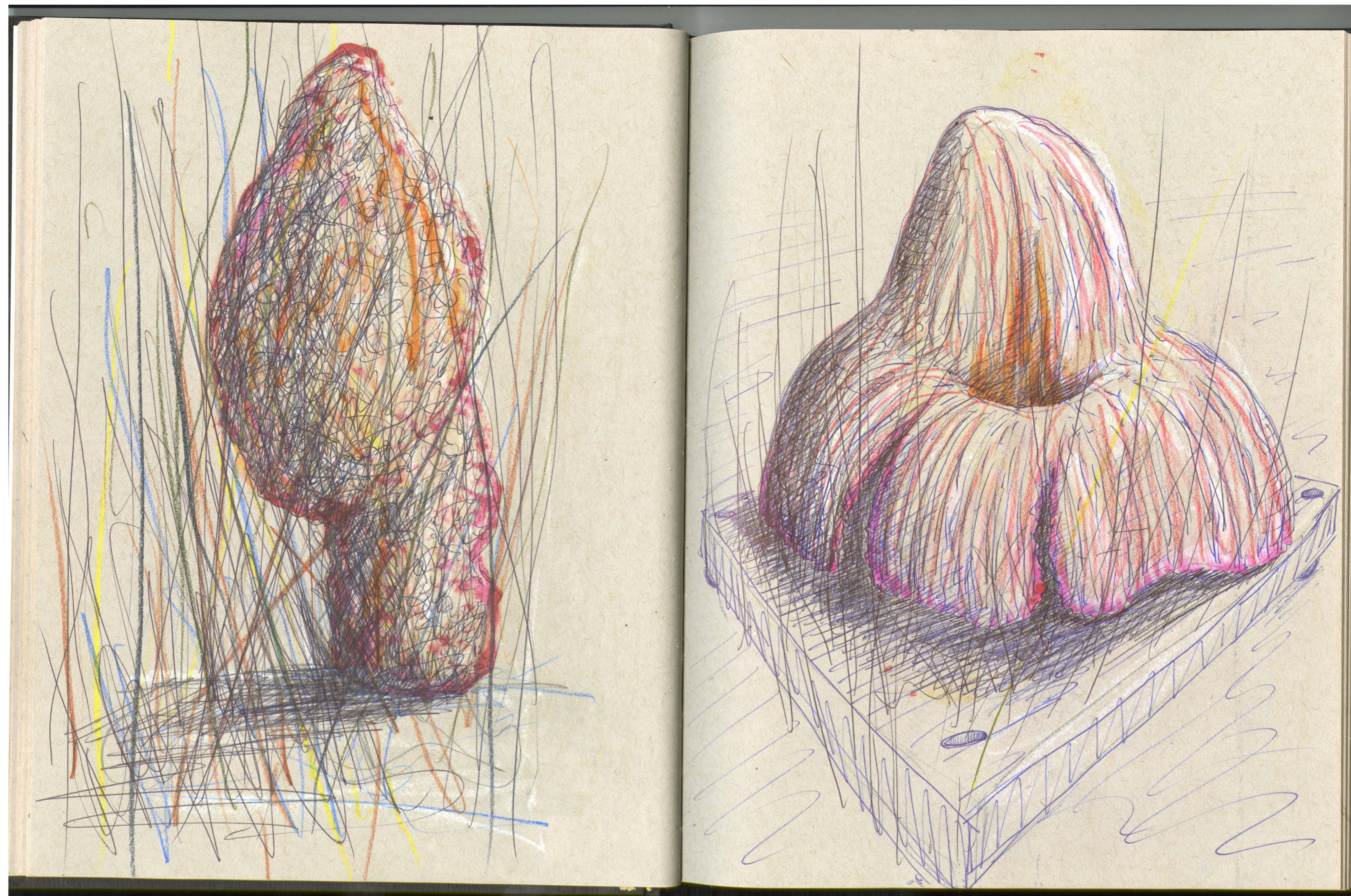
More thoughts as to flowerhead forms as well as an idea about presenting a flowerhead as a more sculptural idea. At this point I was starting to make variations in ceramics, hence the flowerhead on a plinth/making board.



One of the final ceramic memorial flowers made for Patching.



Because I'm now making variations in ceramics, the drawings are becoming more sculptural.



More sculptural variations, and the drawings are now also using biro as well as pencil crayons and white pastel.

At this point I have actually got to grips with the grey paper. It has taken a while to familiarise myself with both the texture of the paper surface and its tonality. Once this happens I feel happier and get a sense that the drawings are less about me trying to impose an image on the page and more about the paper surface working as a partner in co-creation.

I also have part of my mind in the ceramics studio, and I can visually feel my way over the surfaces of the drawing, in a similar way to what is happening when I with my fingers feel my way over surfaces in three dimensions.



More thoughts about the lilyhead.

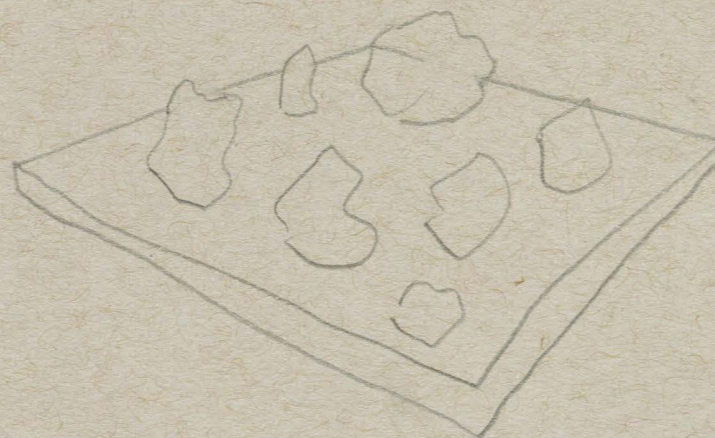


The drawing on the right is a visualisation of how a white ceramic lily would look when standing within a field of grasses.

On the left another idea begins, which is to do with how my animal/plant forms could be made into moveable forms. I had another exhibition to think about and this was going to involve putting my work on wheels. What I didn't want to do was impose the wheels on the work and so I was beginning to think about building around the need for them.

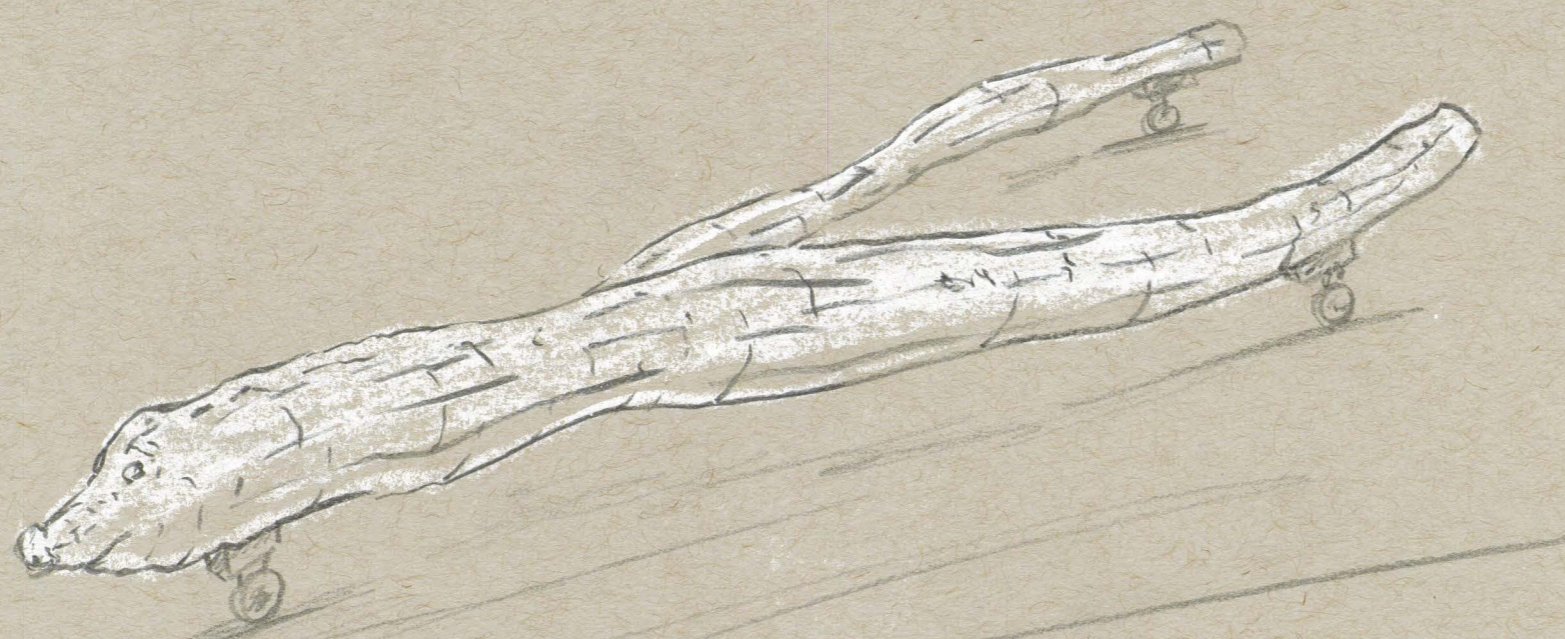
In the studio I had begun joining tree branches together to form flat frameworks that could have small wheels attached to them. Once that was done, holes were drilled into the framework so that forms could emerge vertically from these bases.

Mobile mountain.
IKEA table top
converted.



Another idea was in the air, that was concerned with how to present forms on a table top. (Table mountain) This was rattling around my head at the same time as I was making flat frameworks with added wheels.

Sometimes the frameworks would suggest things in their own right, hence the lower drawing.





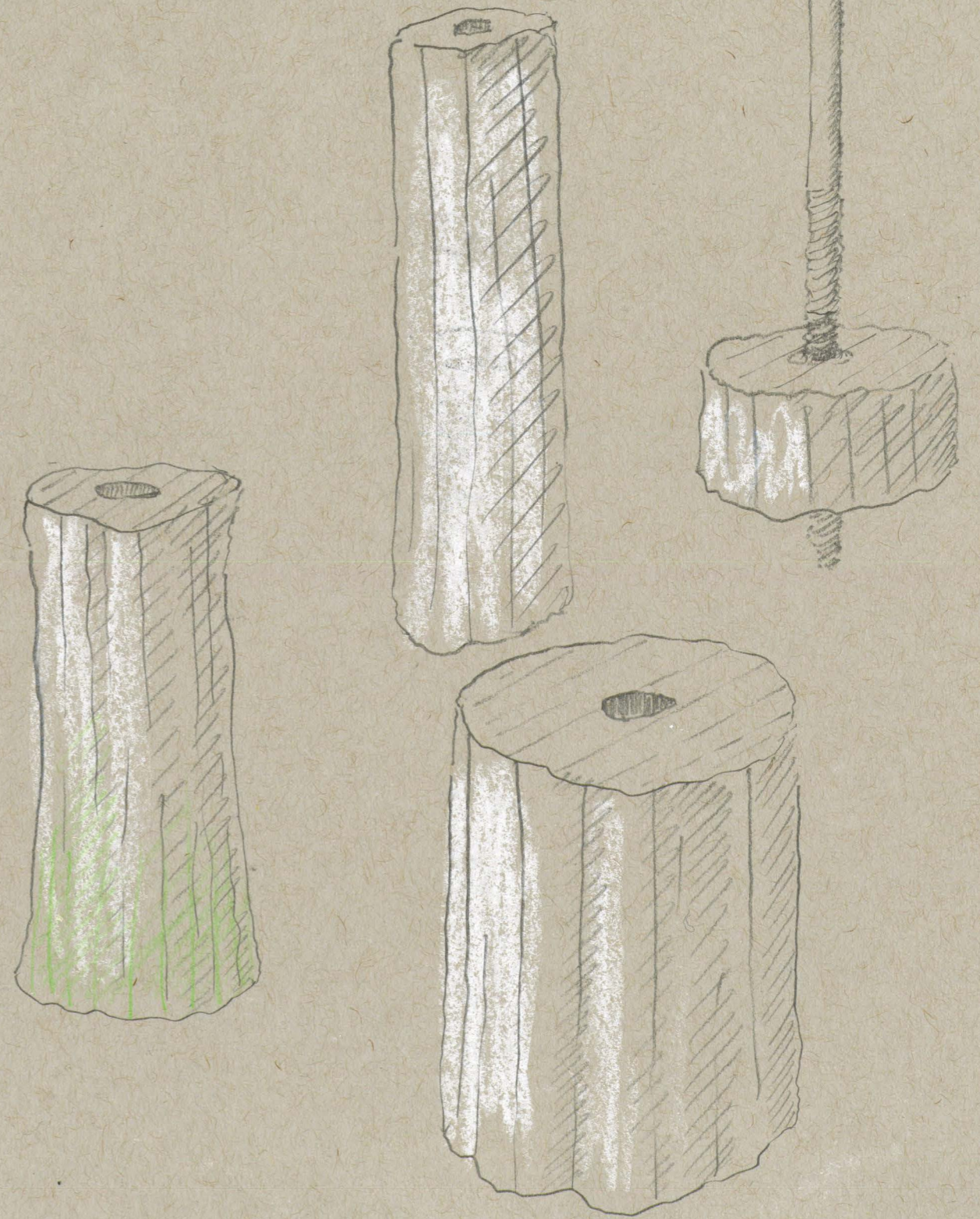
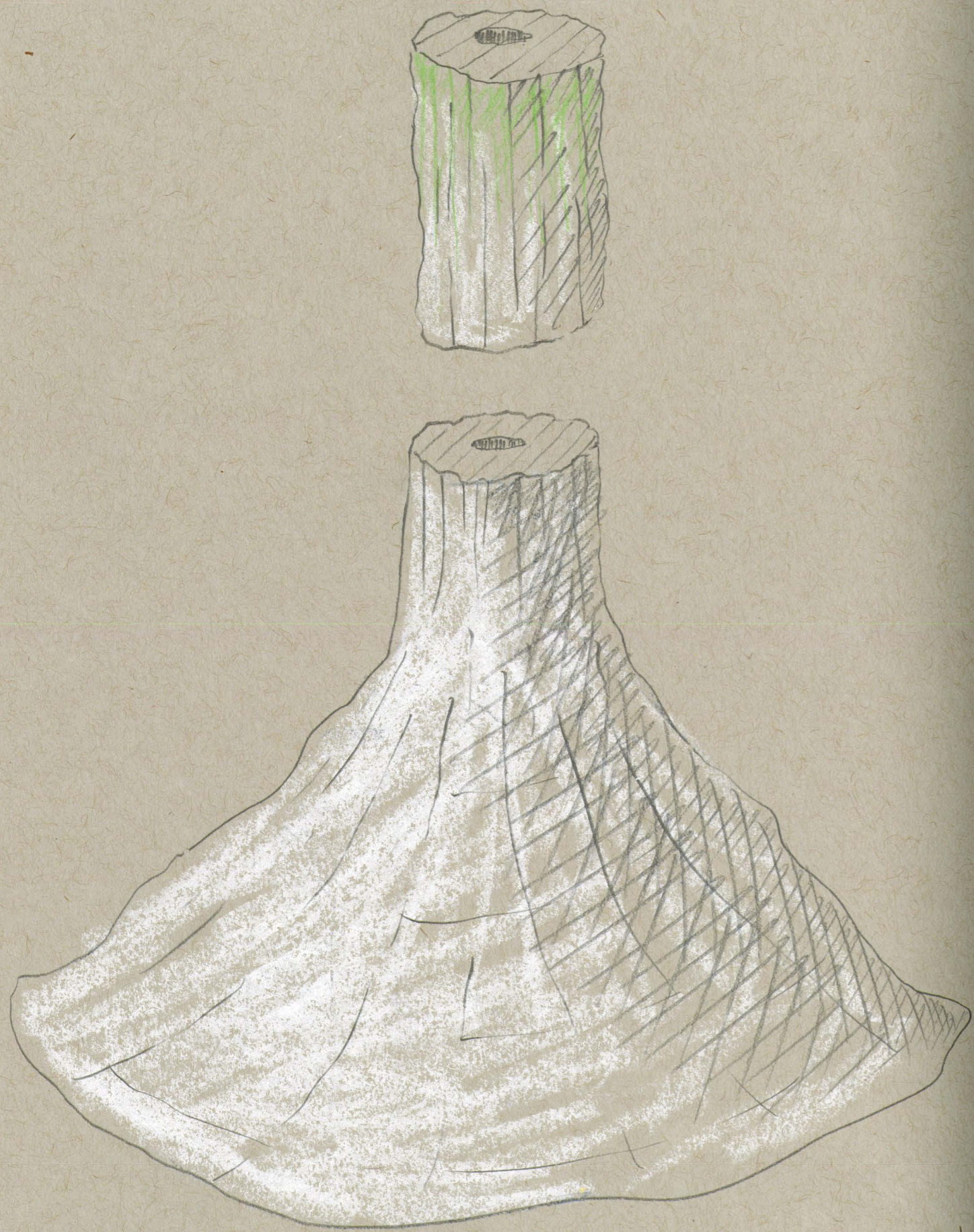
In the studio I had been fitting bent branches together in different ways and was thinking about a circular form as a symbol of human conceptual bullying being applied to nature.

The drawing on the right was an idea literally beginning to sprout.



Still thinking about lilies and other flowers. This time because I had been making the frameworks out of which I could grow vertical forms, I realised I was alluding to root structures.

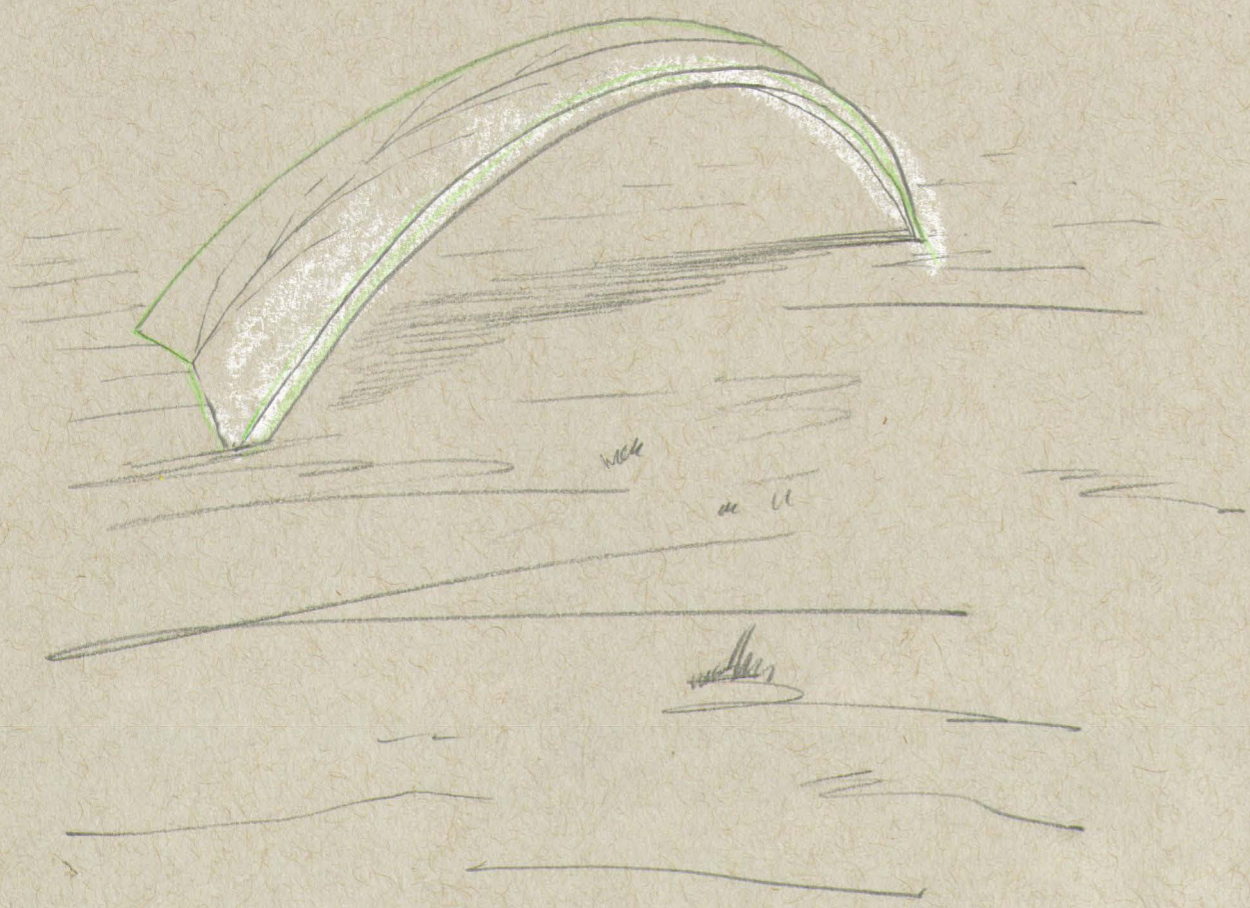
On the right an animal (bear?) appears to inhabit the flowerhead.



A couple of pages devoted to how the ceramic stems of flowers would need to be constructed. The idea of a metal rod that could be run through the centre of each unit was important, as well as the idea on the left of having a form that could act as a base if I needed to exhibit these forms in a gallery that would not allow holes to be drilled in the floor.

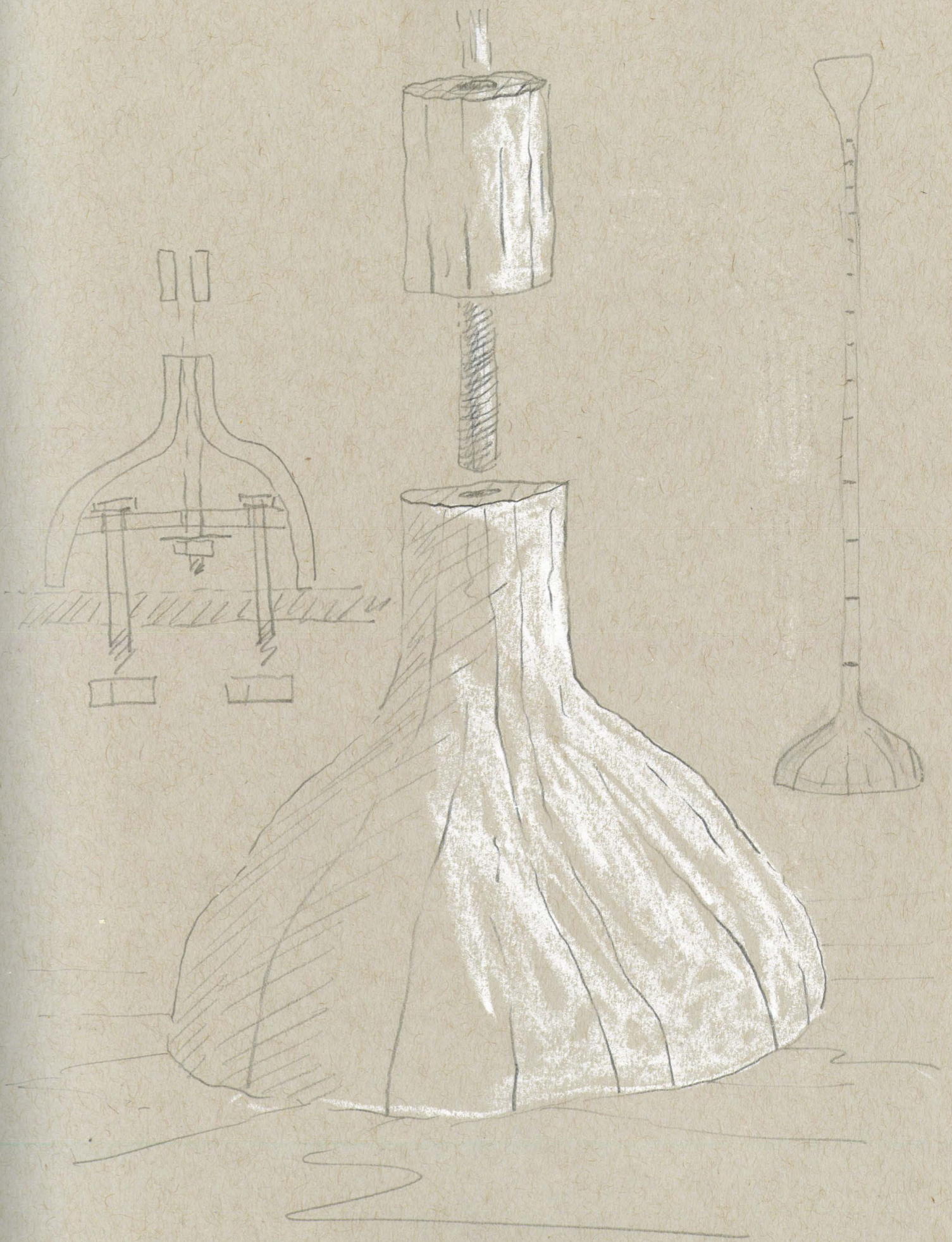
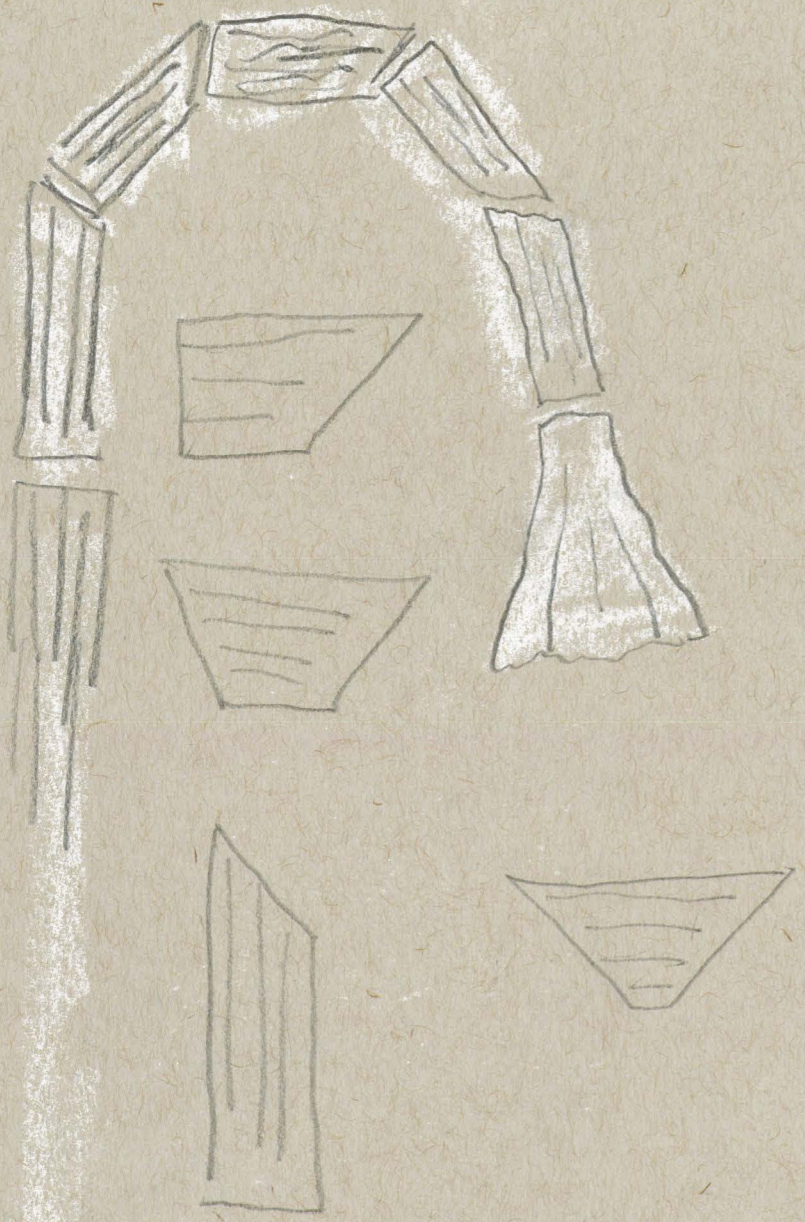


Continuing thoughts as to how this form of iron rod construction could lead to other hybrid ceramic forms.

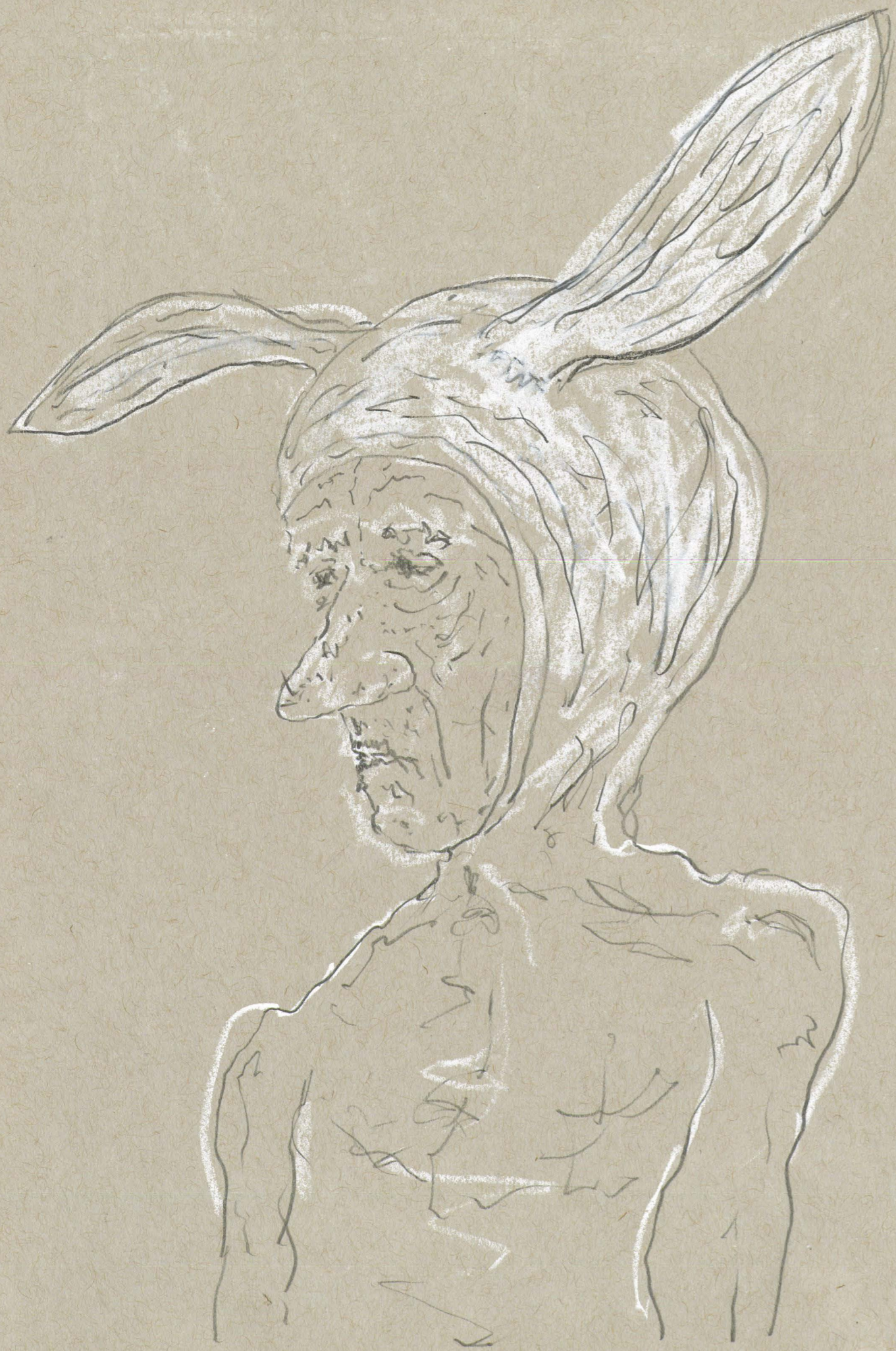


More thoughts on hybrids.

The drawing on the left was an attempt to 'see' a leaf as a structure that could in principle be any size.



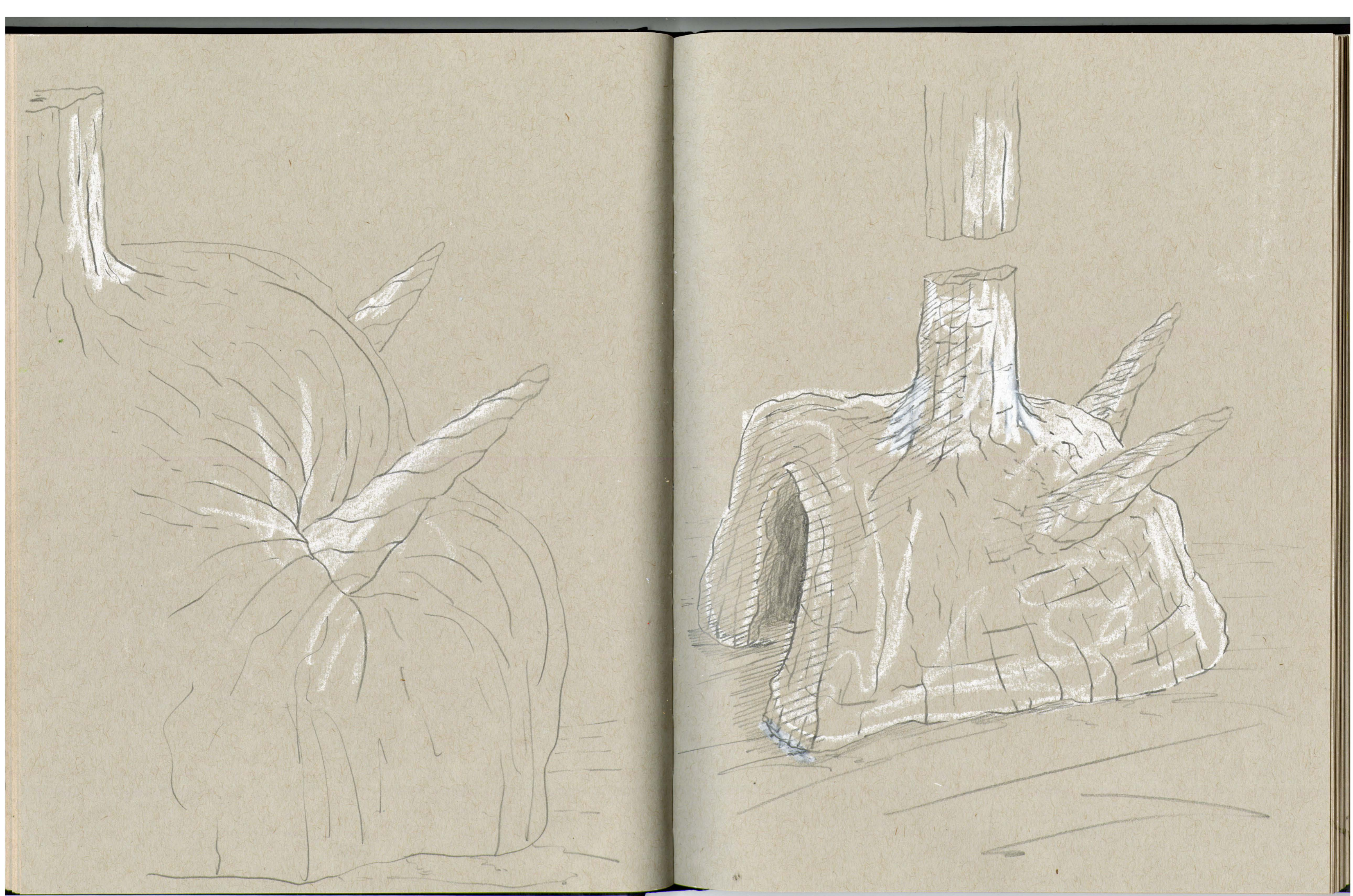
More thoughts about construction.



I had seen a small boy wearing bunny ears and it reminded me that we do tend to dress children as animals. I of course then thought about older people wearing bunny ears. I wasn't really thinking, more just letting an idea come out, so that at another point in the future, I would have a starting point.

A baby in a cot and an old person, now thought of as stages of life, as well as how self-awareness changes as we get older and that things worn as children no longer fit us, both in size and in concept.

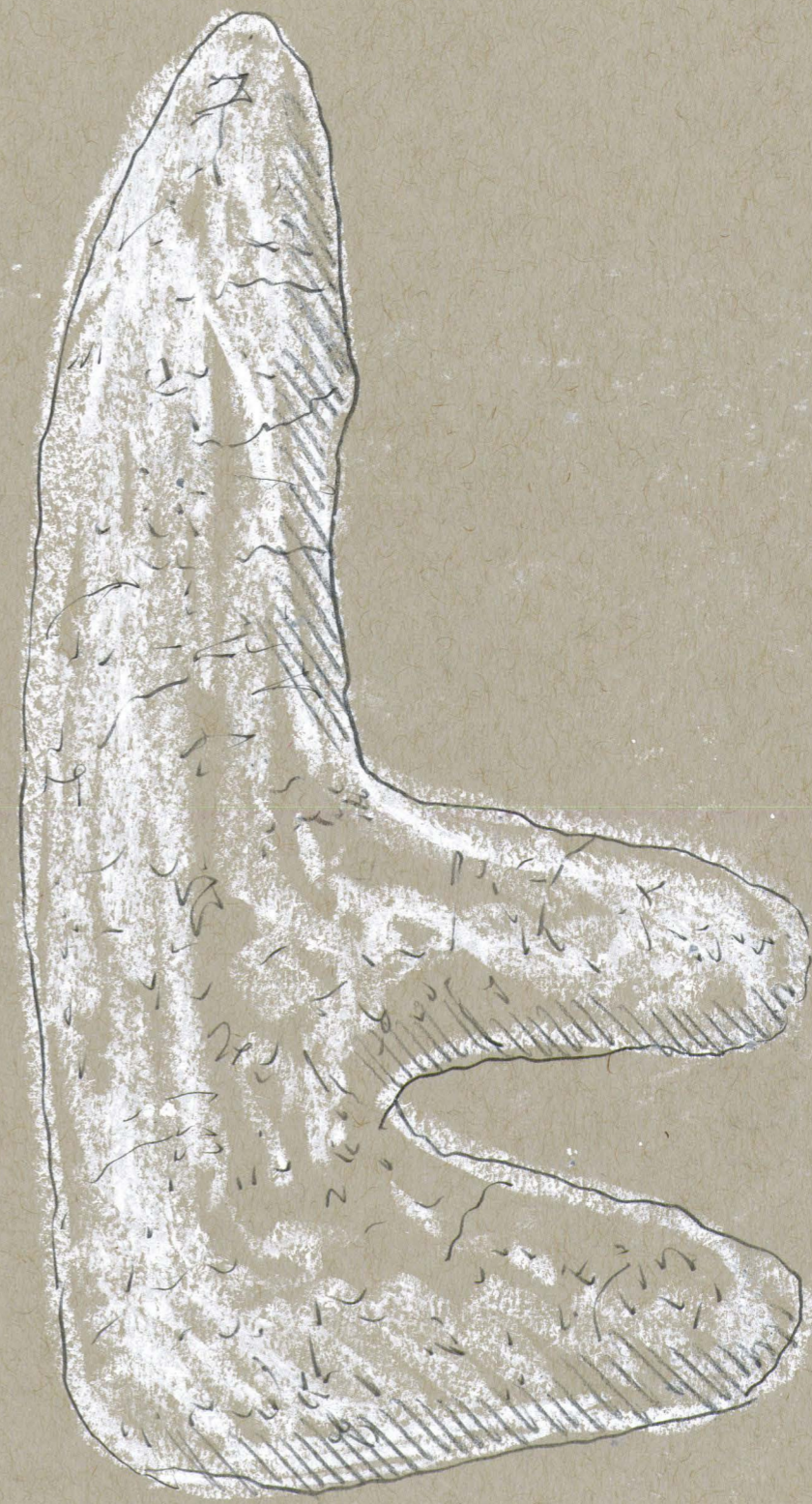
But why can't I go out wearing bunny ears, perhaps I ought to. Another type of idea emerges that is much more performative.



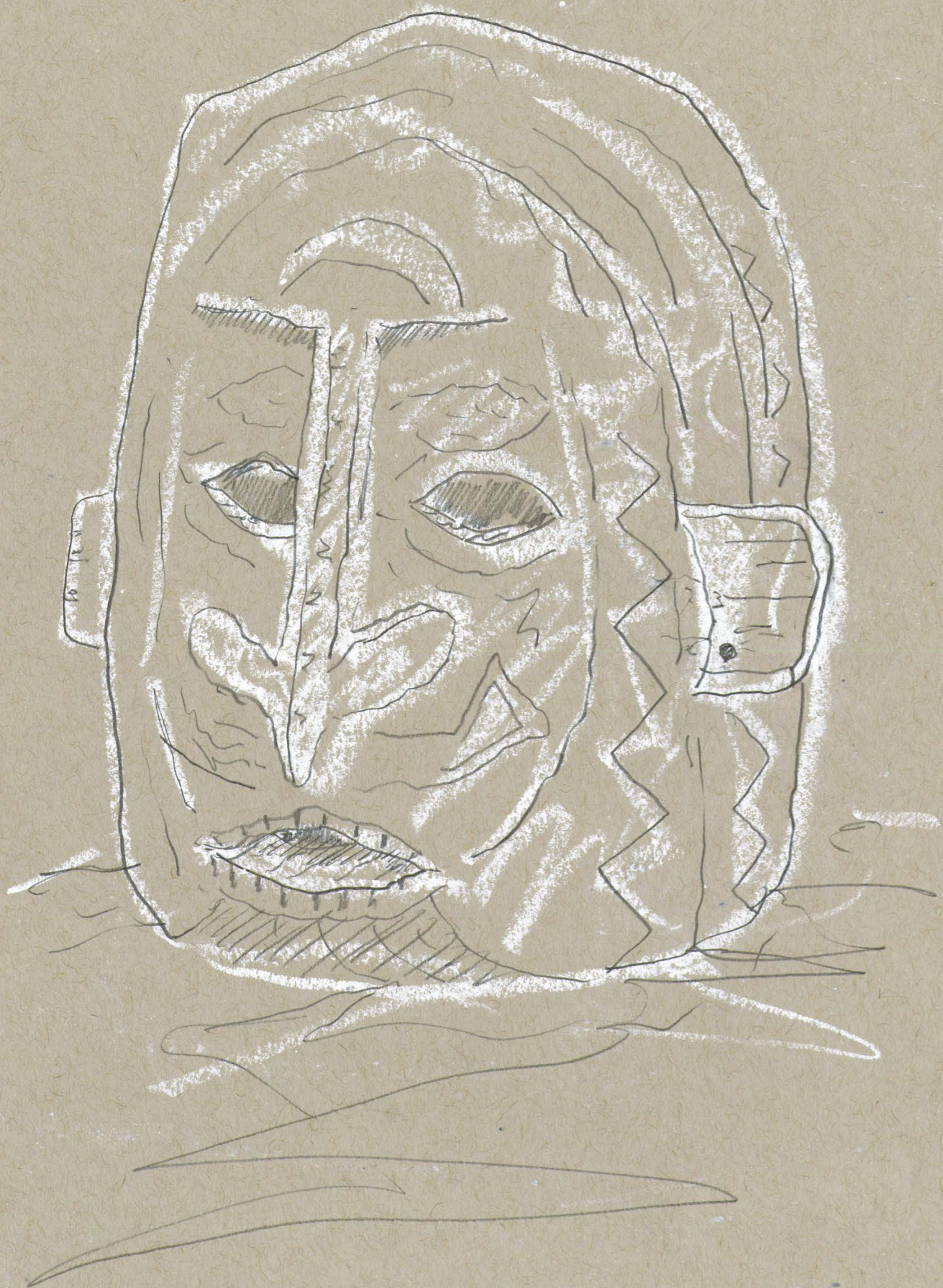
More thoughts about bases for flower stems. I am now thinking more about hybrid forms.



Hybrid forms that are not one thing or another begin to fascinate me. Animal or vegetable?



I had taken this sketchbook to Paris and was making drawings in the Musée du quai Branly of objects that I felt were significant to me. These were sometimes forms that suggested neither one thing or another, such as the drawing on the right, which could be a penis, or an animal and the image on the left which again suggests several things. I was very aware that these objects were made by cultures far removed from my own, but the things made were still acting on me, still passing on some sort of psychic energy and this was somehow very important to me, and I was left wondering how other cultures of times would read the objects I had been making.



More museum drawing. Because of the nature of the space, I had to draw very quickly, using white oil pastel to establish the drawings and then sharpening the forms using a pencil.

The idea of masks allowed me to think of alternative hybrid possibilities, and on the right, the image made me think of people riding an animal and becoming therefore part of that animal.



A three-dimensional form that resonated with me drawn alongside a very flat form, a tile, that had a very different story to tell.

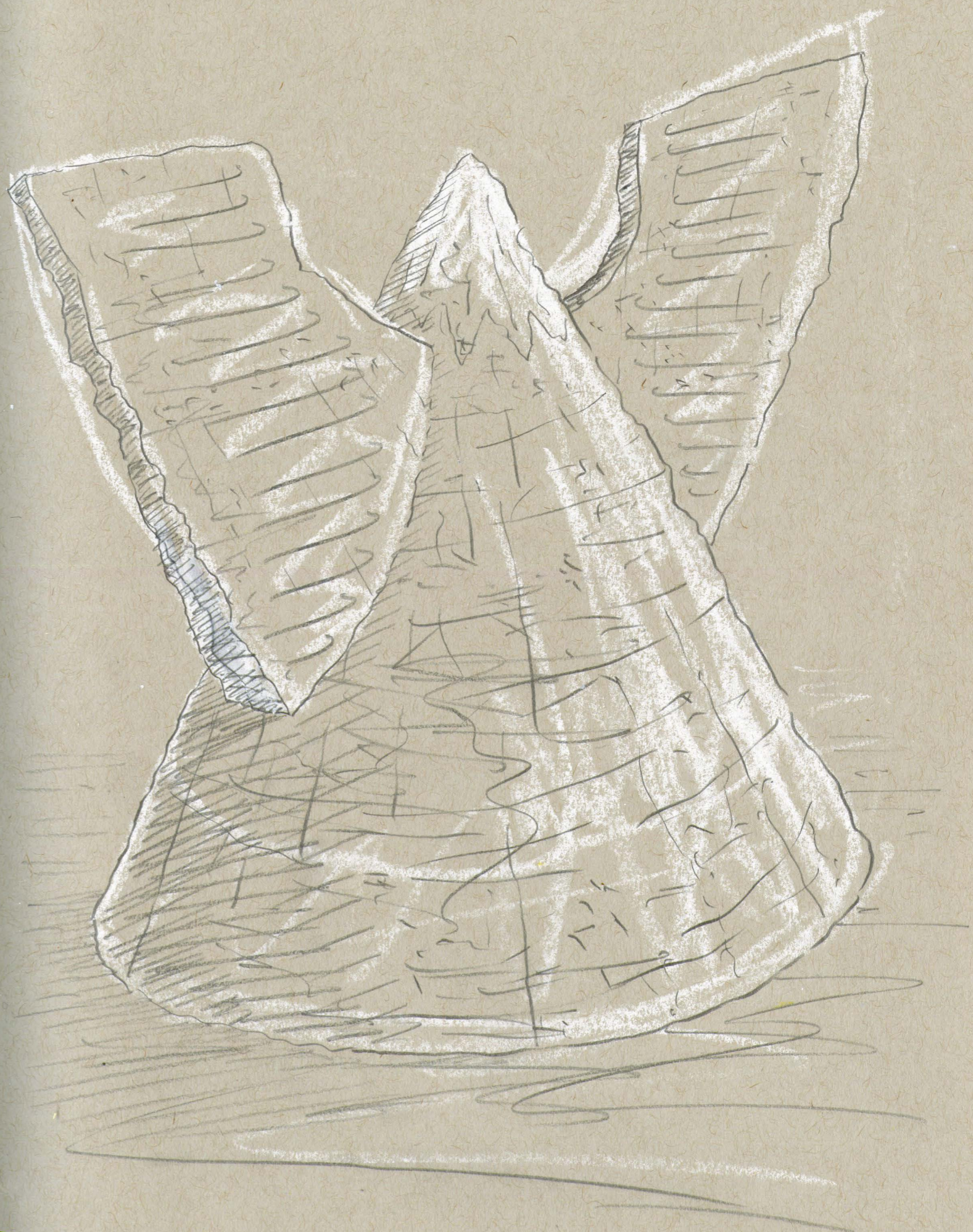
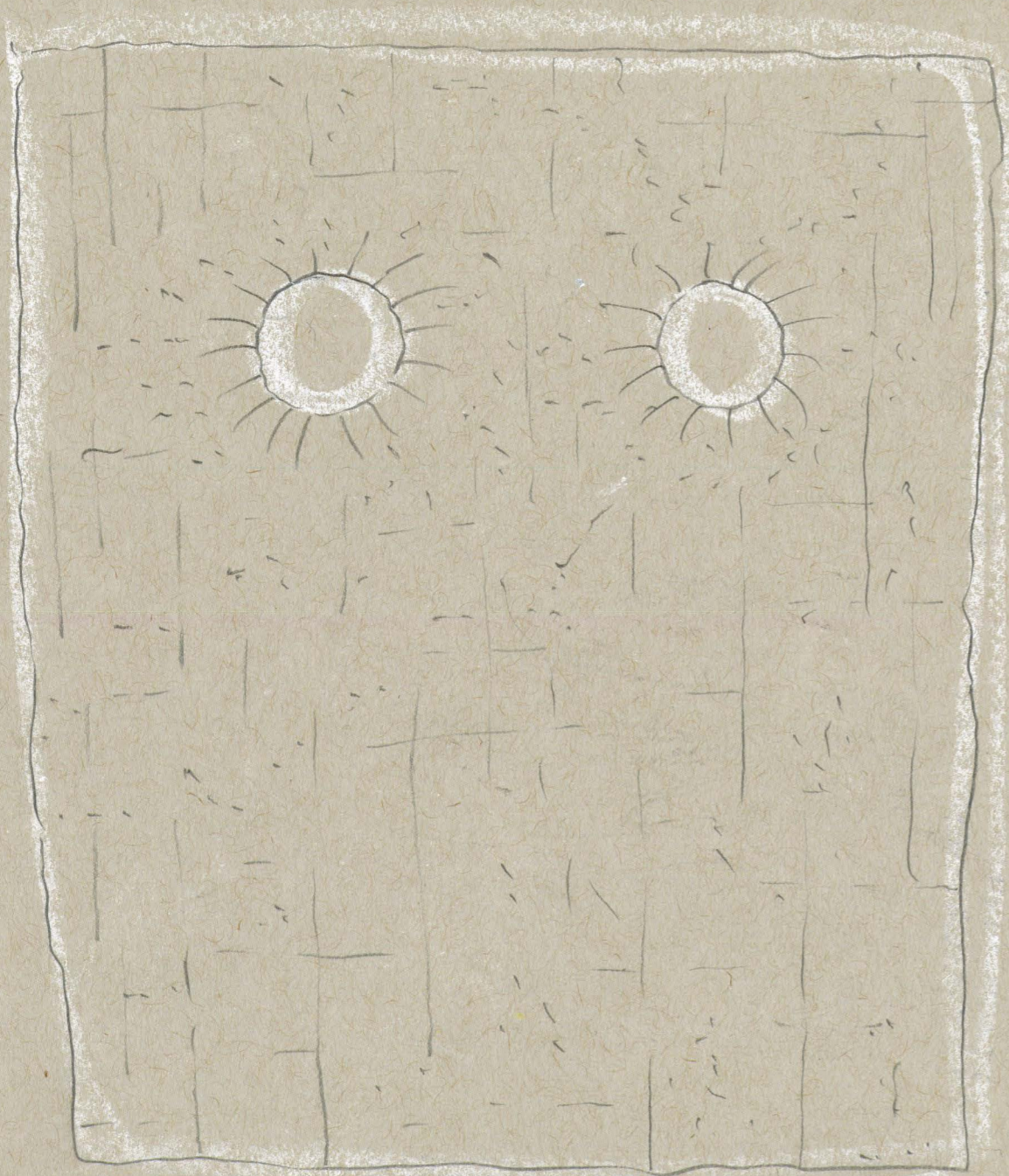
The large sculptural form reminded me of an idea I had about two people joined in love and friendship. In this case a bar united the two halves. The rabbits and the tortoise, simply made me laugh.



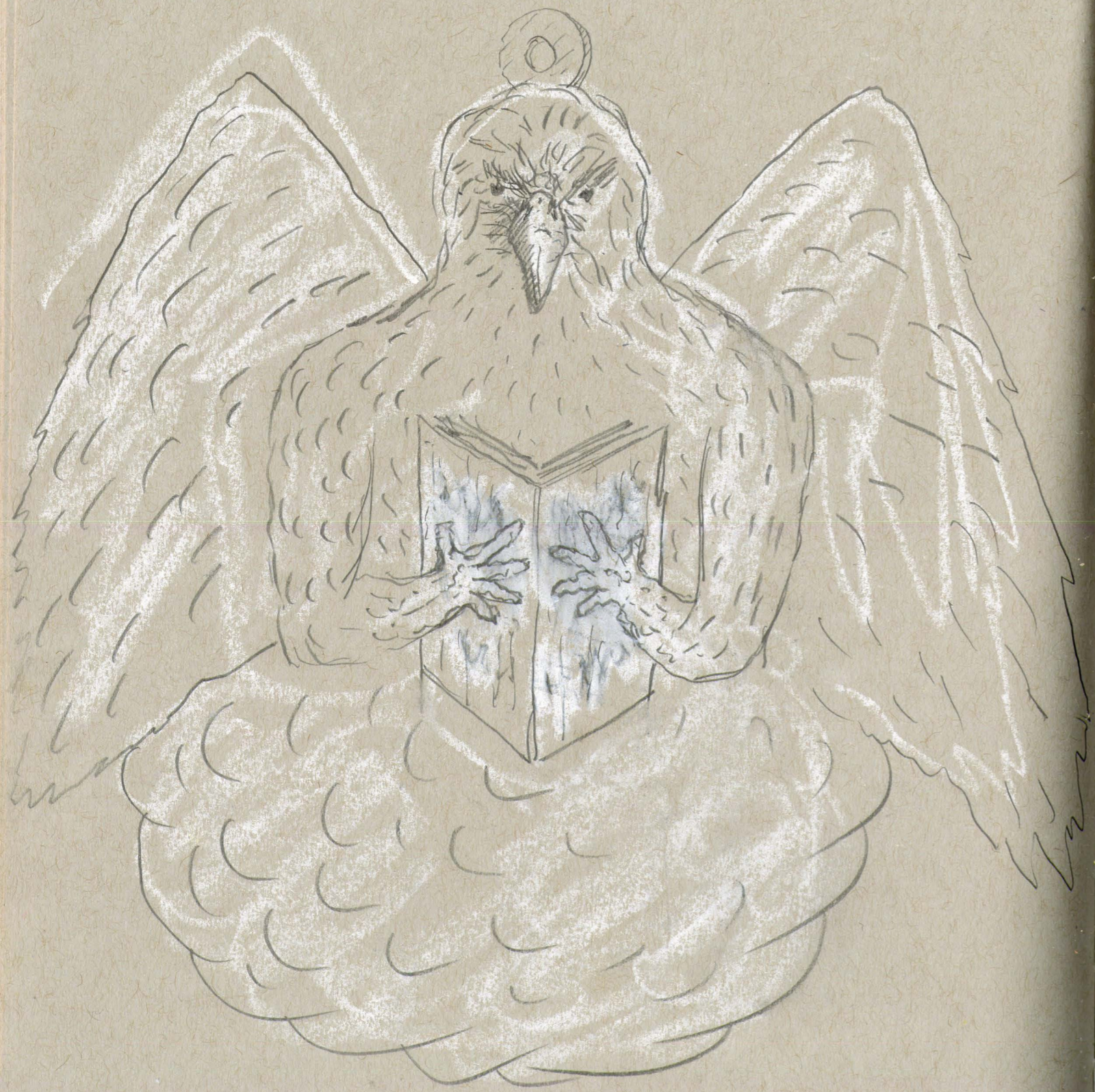
More fragments from the museum. The stacking units reminded me of the ceramic stems I was making for the Patching exhibition, the knee drawing was about a pain I had in my own knee, (too much kneeling on hard floors whilst drawing) and the tube form with a slot, made me think about how any tube form could be both human and a worm or a tree.



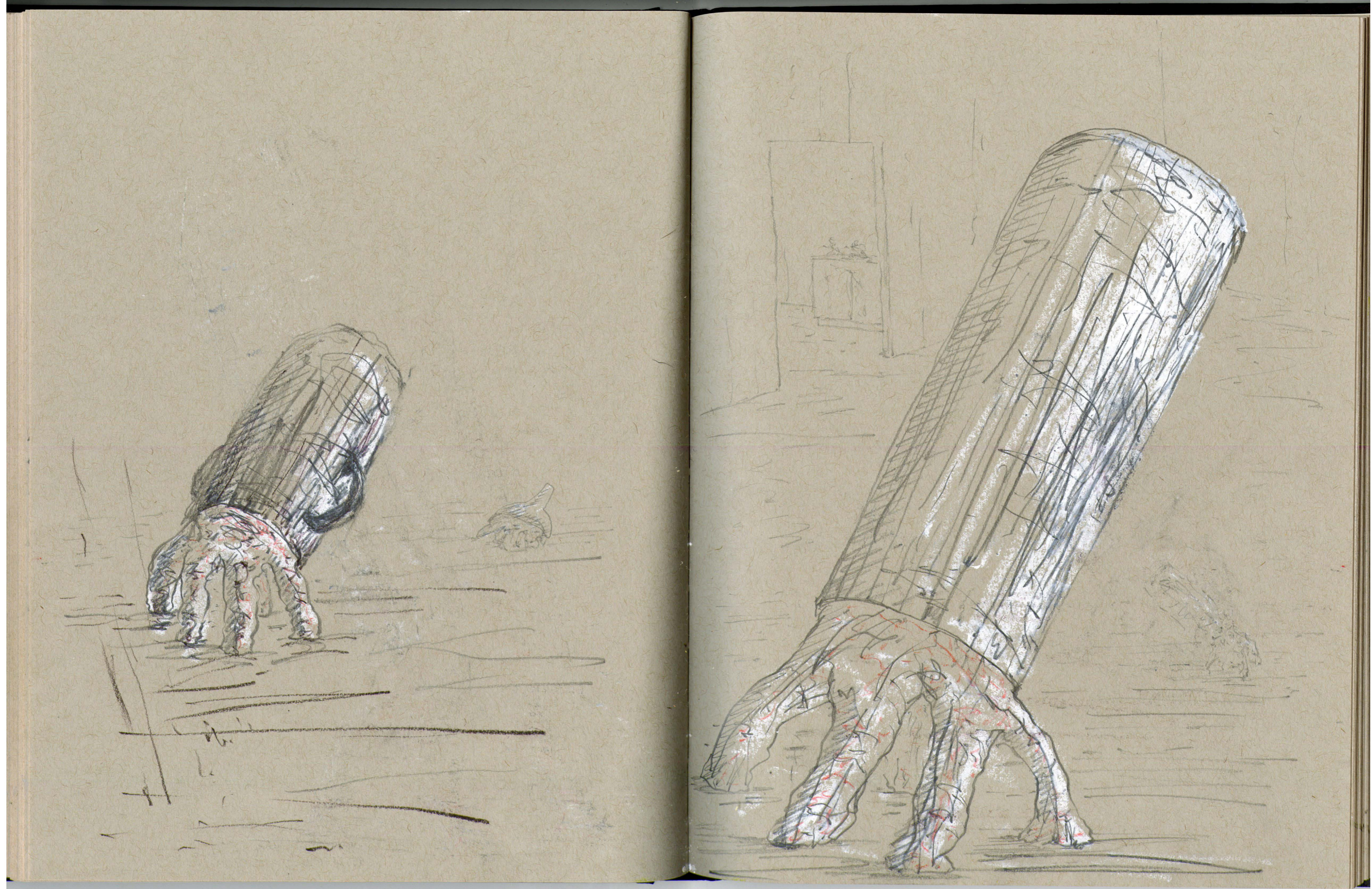
I had been in Paris for the opening of the Thomas Housego exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, and I had been invited because I had contributed to the catalogue. However at some point I must have eaten something that violently disagreed with me and so I found myself holed up in a hotel room, and semi delirious with constant sickness and diarrhoea. Looking up from my bed with my head dipped over the edge, I saw a vase of flowers, that in my mind seemed up-side down. As I saw this the flowers became legs and I rolled over and drew what I had seen. In that moment I had discovered another idea, objects like hermit crab shells.



Things seen in the museum, begin to shape ideas. A mountain that can fly, a flat section of bark that has holes for eyes becomes a face. The 'bark' er.



More thoughts from the museum. As I was confined to bed, I had to dredge these up from museum memories. Hybrids of mixes were ideal things to draw for someone drifting in and out of sleep.



Back in Leeds the upside down vase and flower idea is returned to and I begin to see hermit crab forms emerge. These are objects that are exactly right for the (im)Material Disarray exhibition I had been accepted for in Wakefield.

My idea was that when the people were not there the objects would begin to walk around and take on a life of their own.



The cheese grater and its legs were fired together, the process heavily distressing the metal.



Jars and funnels and basically any items that could be found in the kitchen and that could be 'peopled' by hermit crab like hands became subject to either drawn images or actual making in the studio.



Studio view from this time

More thoughts on the exhibition can be found on my blog:
<https://fineartdrawinglca.blogspot.com/2019/09/immaterial-disarray-exhibition.html>



Back to thoughts about flower heads, this time making images directly from observation. This switching between ideas development and observational drawing is in my case not as dramatic as it may appear. I tend to find drawing from life as much about the imagination as the making of drawings that emerge from inside my head's thought streams. The real world and the imaginary one slip between each other,



That halfway house between seeing and imagining. A drawing begun from observation but then a bird emerges. The continuing discovery of hybrid forms is essential to my thinking. A couple of seed heads on the left feel as if they are atomically beginning to explode and as they do so they too can become something else.

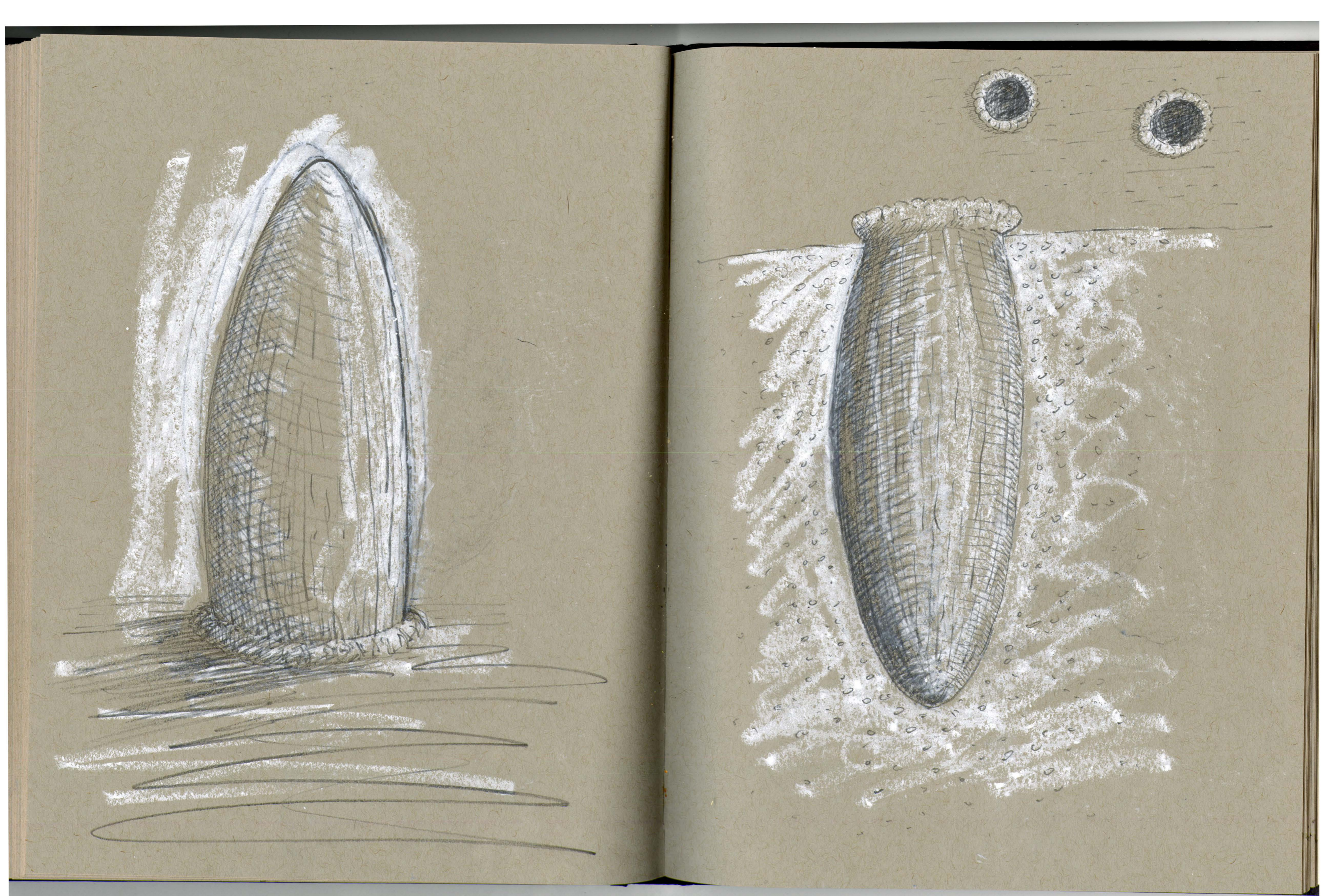


The exploding seedpod from the page before has now settled down and has found its form as a more three-dimensional object. On the left a plant begins to grow.

Thinking about bases again. This hybrid form was seen in a book of Renaissance furniture.

The drawing on the left is simply an idea of the human figure in movement, one position stands behind another, as if when we move we leave behind an image that then is like a ghost of the body's former self.





A pod type form, both standing and thought of as a negative space that could be a hole in something. The two circular forms on the right could be holes in the ground as much as flower forms.



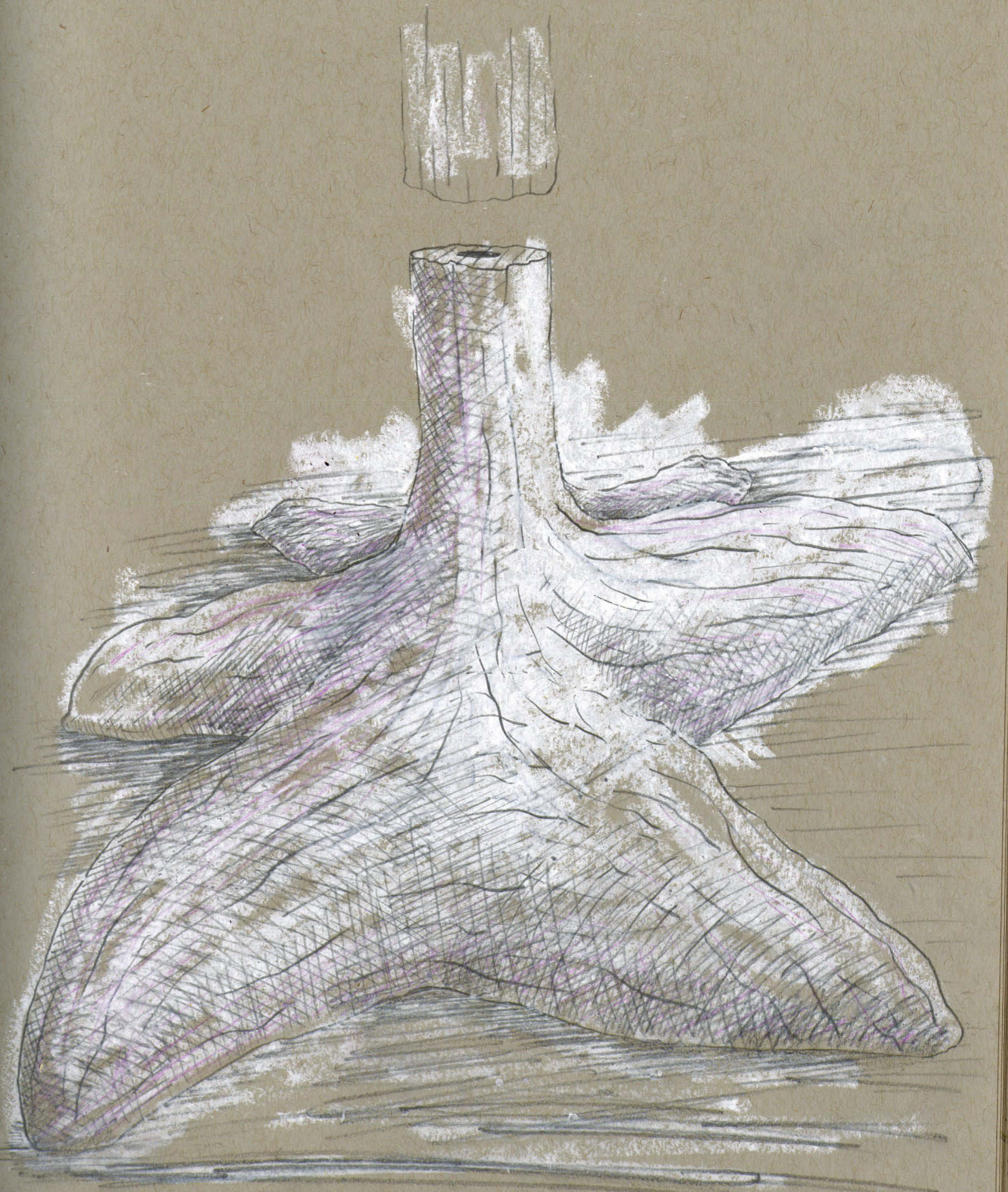
Ideas for bases that stems for ceramic flowers could plug in to. I was still thinking about hybrids and therefore mammals, amphibians as well as non living forms were being considered.



More ideas for bases. From slugs to more Classical ideas taken from the feet of antique furniture.



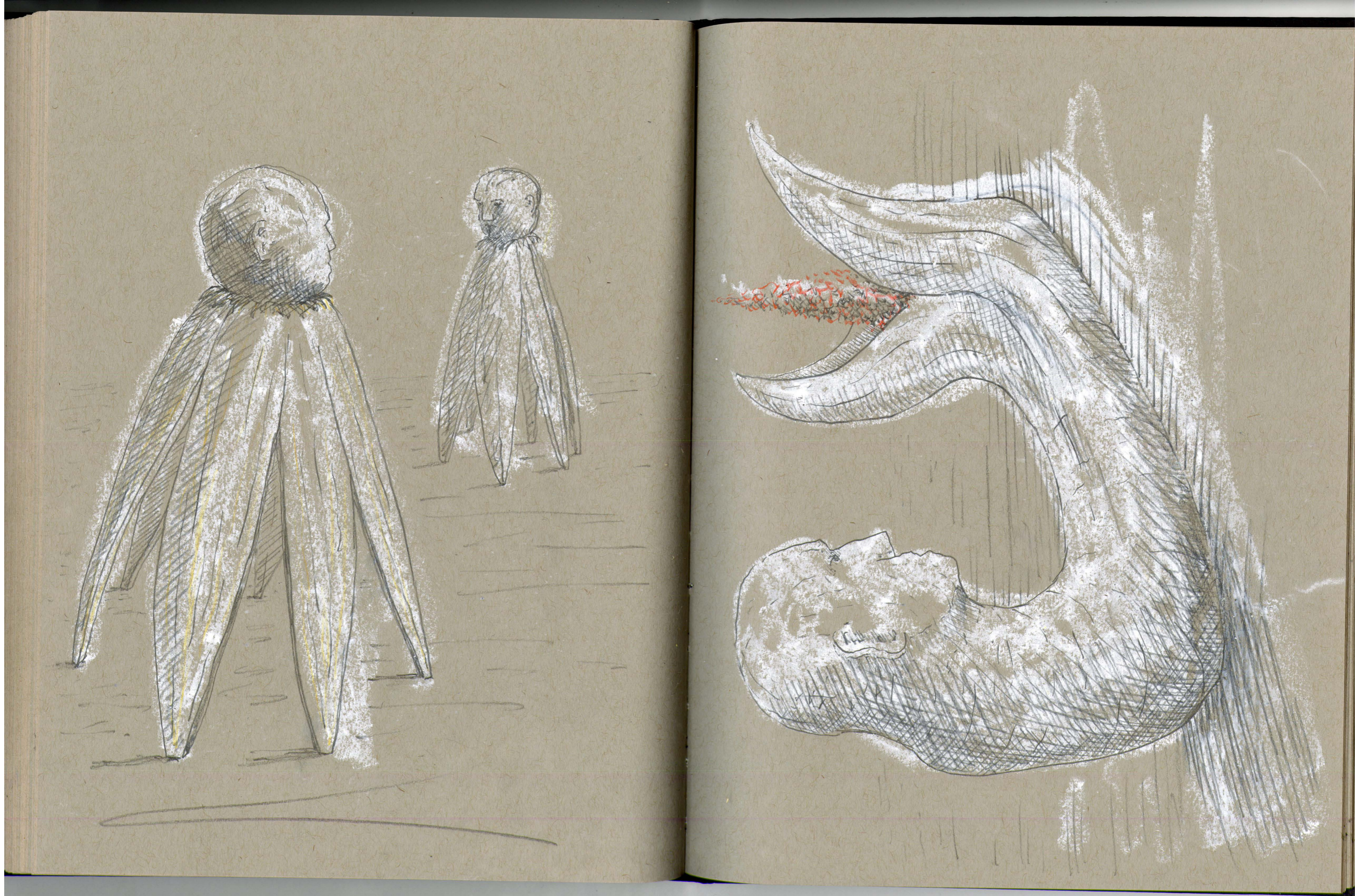
One of several bases made



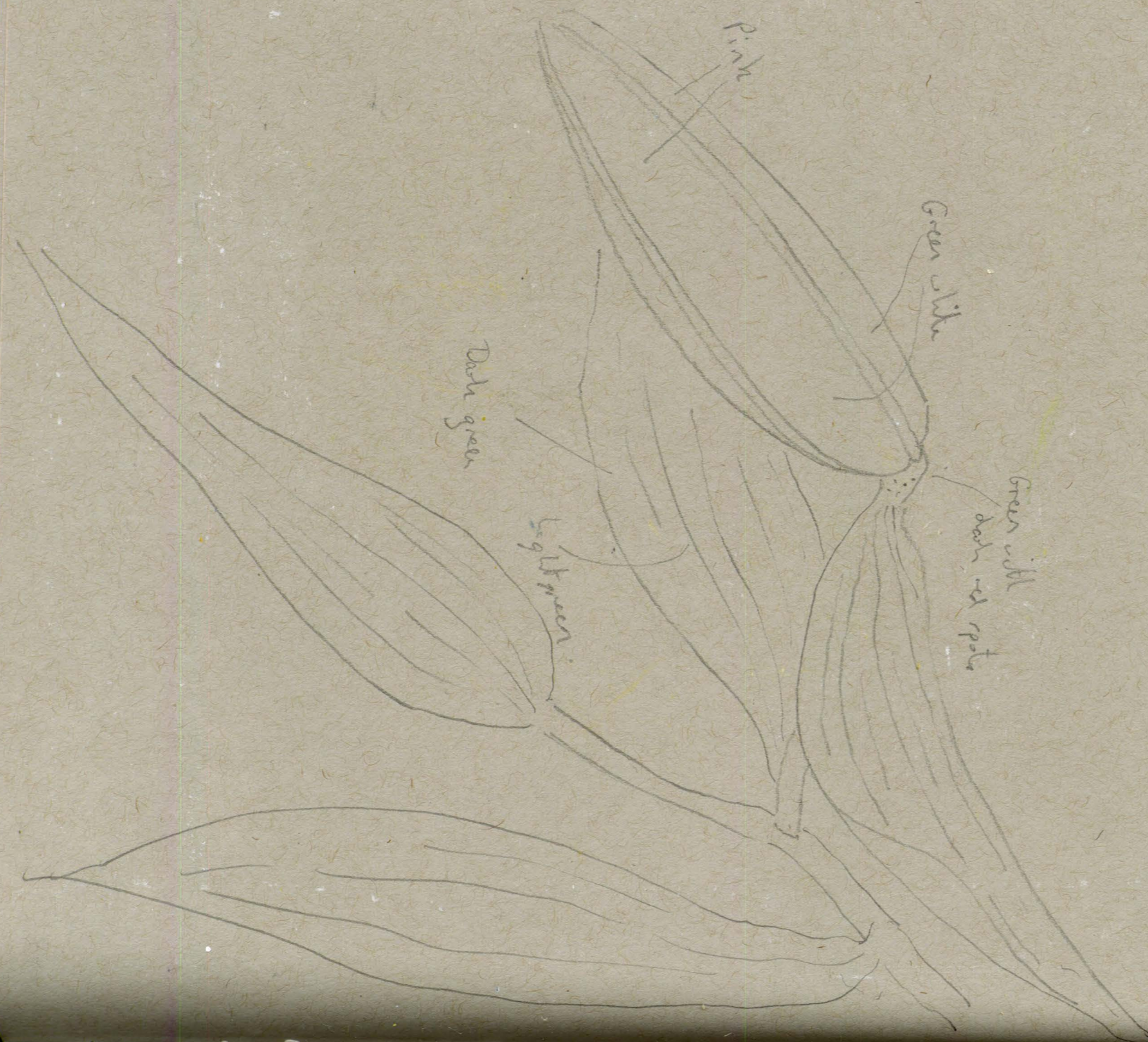
More bases



Thinking about flower heads again. Trying to highlight sculptural possibilities.



The flowerhead idea is taken further and on the right, head and flower enter into a dialogue.



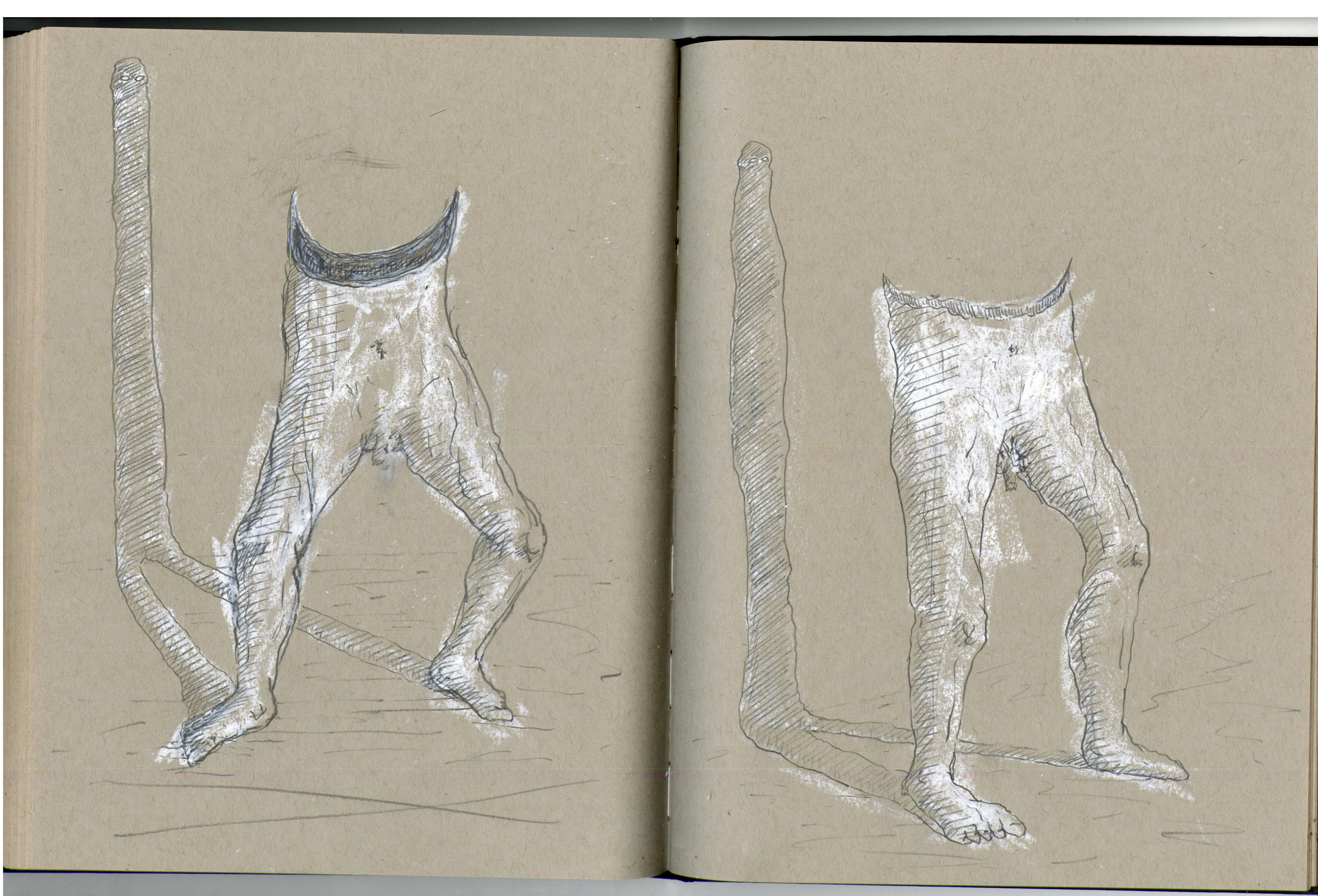
Sooty emerges and enters into a conversation with a daffodil.

Sooty as a character has entered into my thoughts ever since as a boy I was given a Sooty puppet to play with. He is a sort of avatar, and operates partly as a fetish and partly as an extension of myself.

Initially given to me by my mother as something to play with when waiting for her to finish her job as a cinema usherette, Sooty is often therefore seen as if on stage or on screen in the cinema.

The image above, is a simple drawing of a plant, reminding me of the names for different parts.





The hollow body and the shadow. The body as a bag, a hollow container, an idea linked to the insubstantiality of the shadow and how it could begin to have substance. A new idea begins to emerge.



A metamorphosis between flower and body suggests itself. The one giving animal intimations to the plant and the other giving plant intimations to the animal. The fact I had been drawing hollow bodies, meant that I was receptive to other forms occupying the empty space.

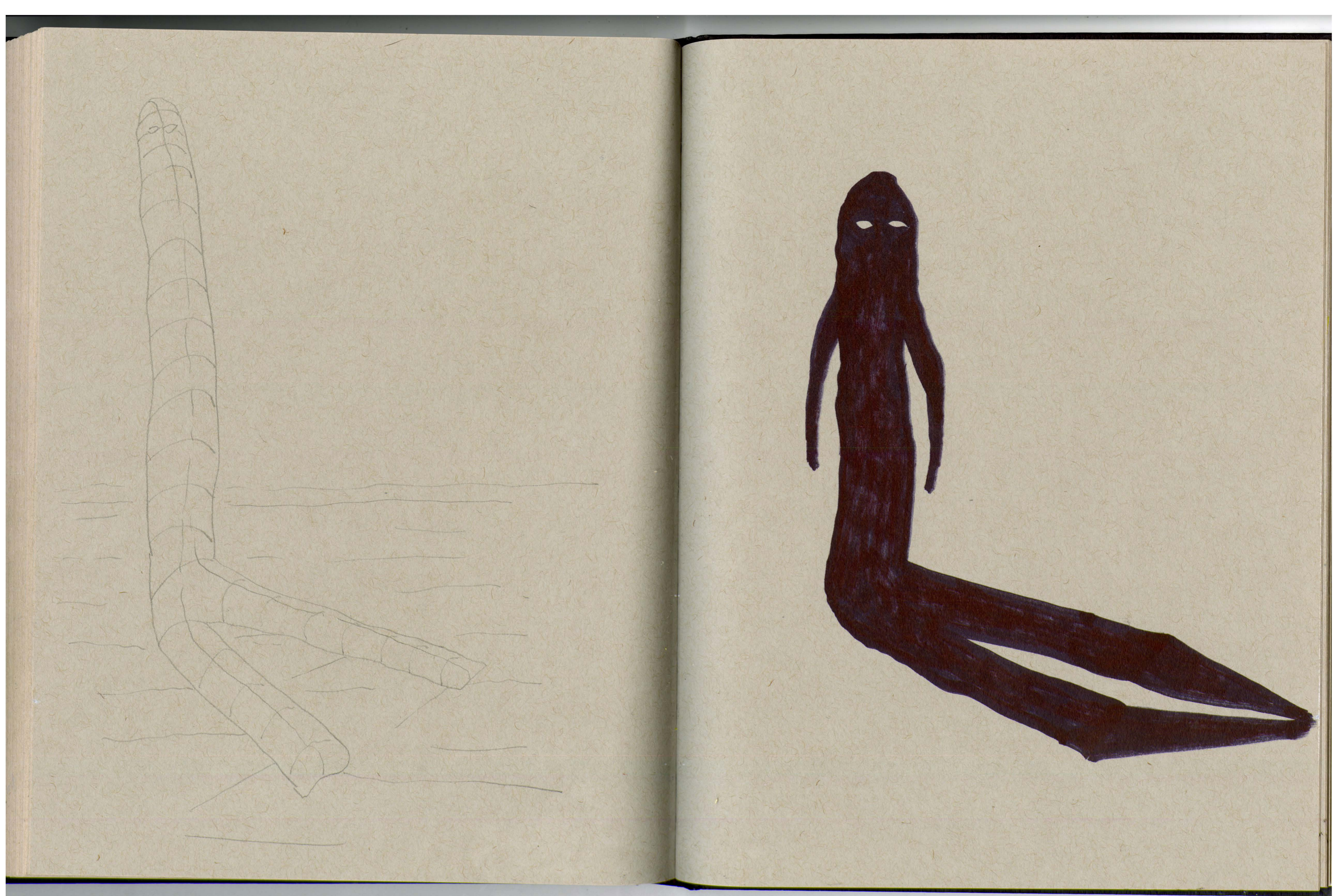


A rabbit fish metamorphosis. An idea that would eventually become a rabbit flower.



The rabbit when made became a ceramic vase, half fish half rabbit, the ears became the vase. A far too awkward idea, but a step on the way to the flower/rabbit

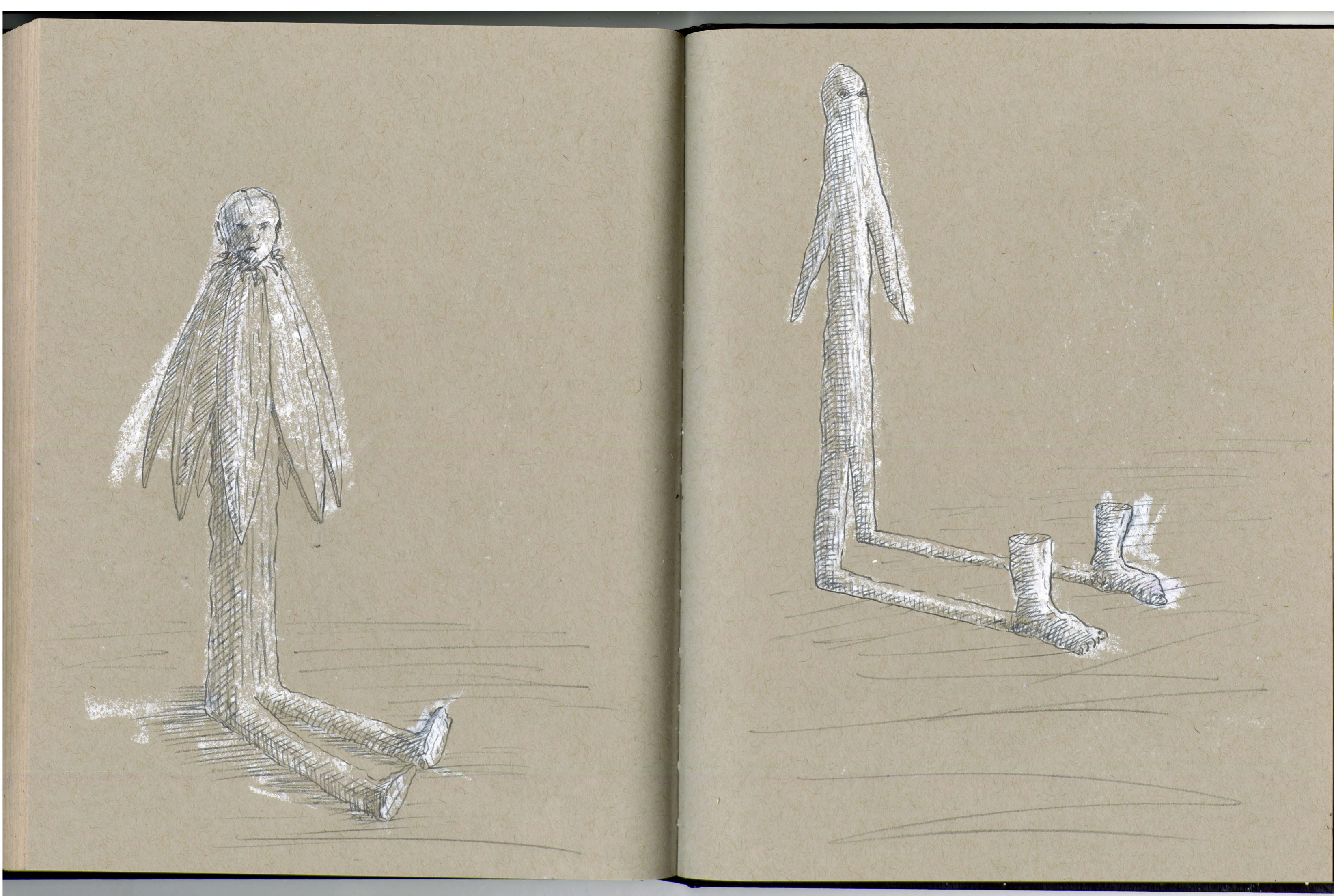




Another reminder to myself of the power of shadows. This time the inked in shadow begins to take on a dark substance for itself and its presence haunts the page. On the left a pencil stick man version.



The shadow gains more substance. On the right a form is also struggling into life.



The shadow forms as they materialise begin to make hybrids with flowers/humans etc. A body has left behind a pair of shoes/boots/feet skins. Another form of shadow or reminder of what was, a ghost.



The rabbit is still inhabiting these pages. It wants its image to be made in some form or other. I was now thinking about its ears and how I could make a strong enough form for them in ceramics, so that they would not break when in the kiln.

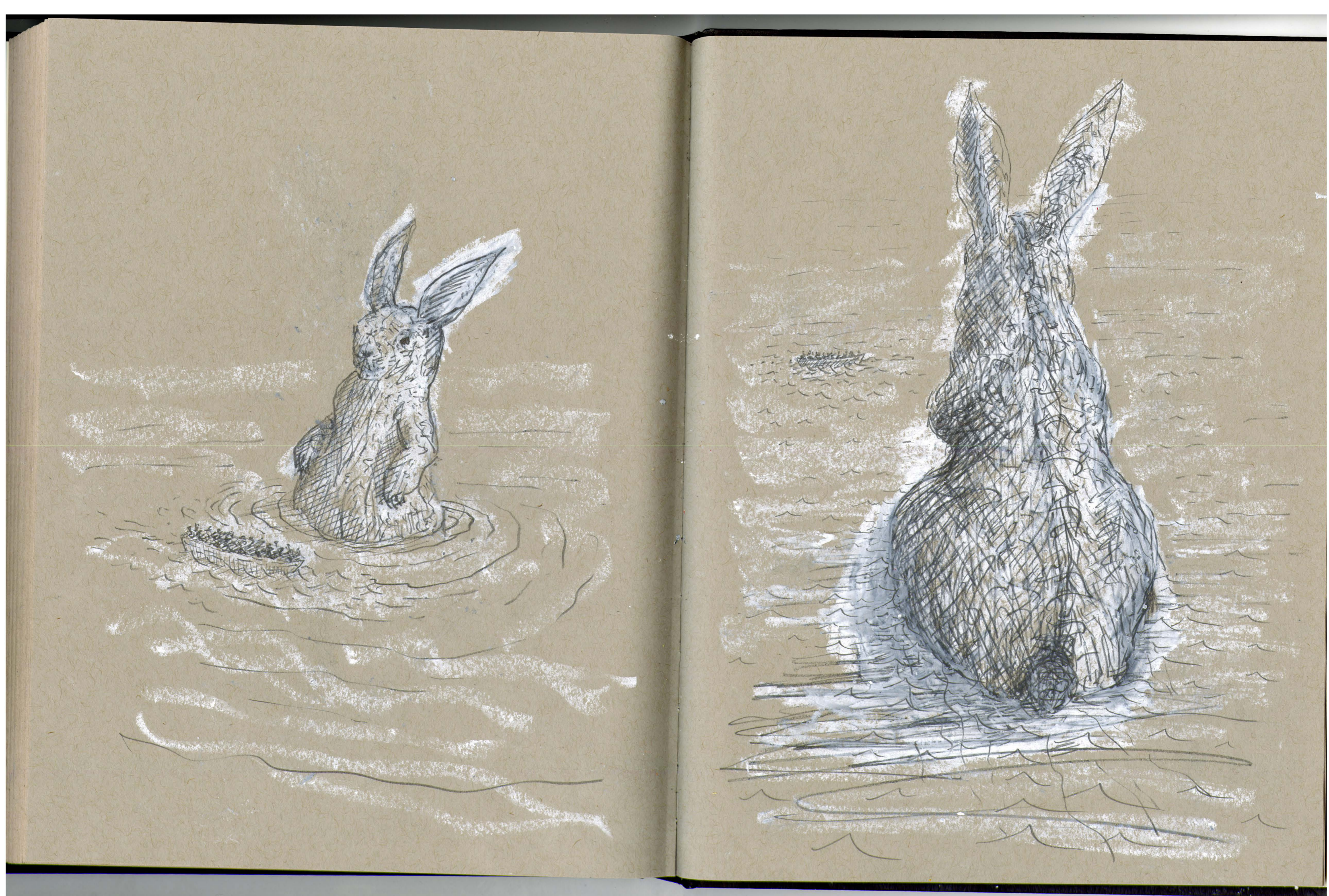


Mountain forms now emerge, on the left a mountain as a costume, on the right a mountain with wings. Something about the huge nature of a mountain and of how we can reduce it to something manageable. In doing so we negate it, doing what we are so good at, making things understandable as words, but in doing so, reducing their reality to a thin disguise, one not unlike a fake moustache.



For Heidi + Feida
A bird costume, your
mother had to fly
too.

Hybrids again, this time humans and birds. Perhaps I was thinking costumes. Disguises are sometimes useful.



That rabbit just wont let go. This time I was channelling an old Godzilla movie. What if the rabbit was huge? The rabbit came to me as an image in a story told to me by a man who had survived a boat crossing the Mediterranean. When in a delirious state he looked over the side of the boat, in the swell he saw a rabbit swimming just below the surface of the sea. He took it as a good luck sign and whenever he looked down into the sea after that, if he stared long enough he would see the rabbit and when he did he knew everything was going to be all right.



A flower-head. This time more dandelion like. On the left trying to channel 'Little Weed' a character from the 'Flowerpot Men' a children's TV program from my childhood. On the right a flower passage-way, they guard a passage into something, not sure what. Also a faint glimpse of an image seen on a visit to an Anselm Kiefer exhibition.



The flower-head/Little Weed
The flower-head/Little Weed
figure now inhabits a world of
its own. The shadow figure re-
turns, a frog looks on. These
things just emerge, they come
out of the pencil cutting into
the white oil pastel.

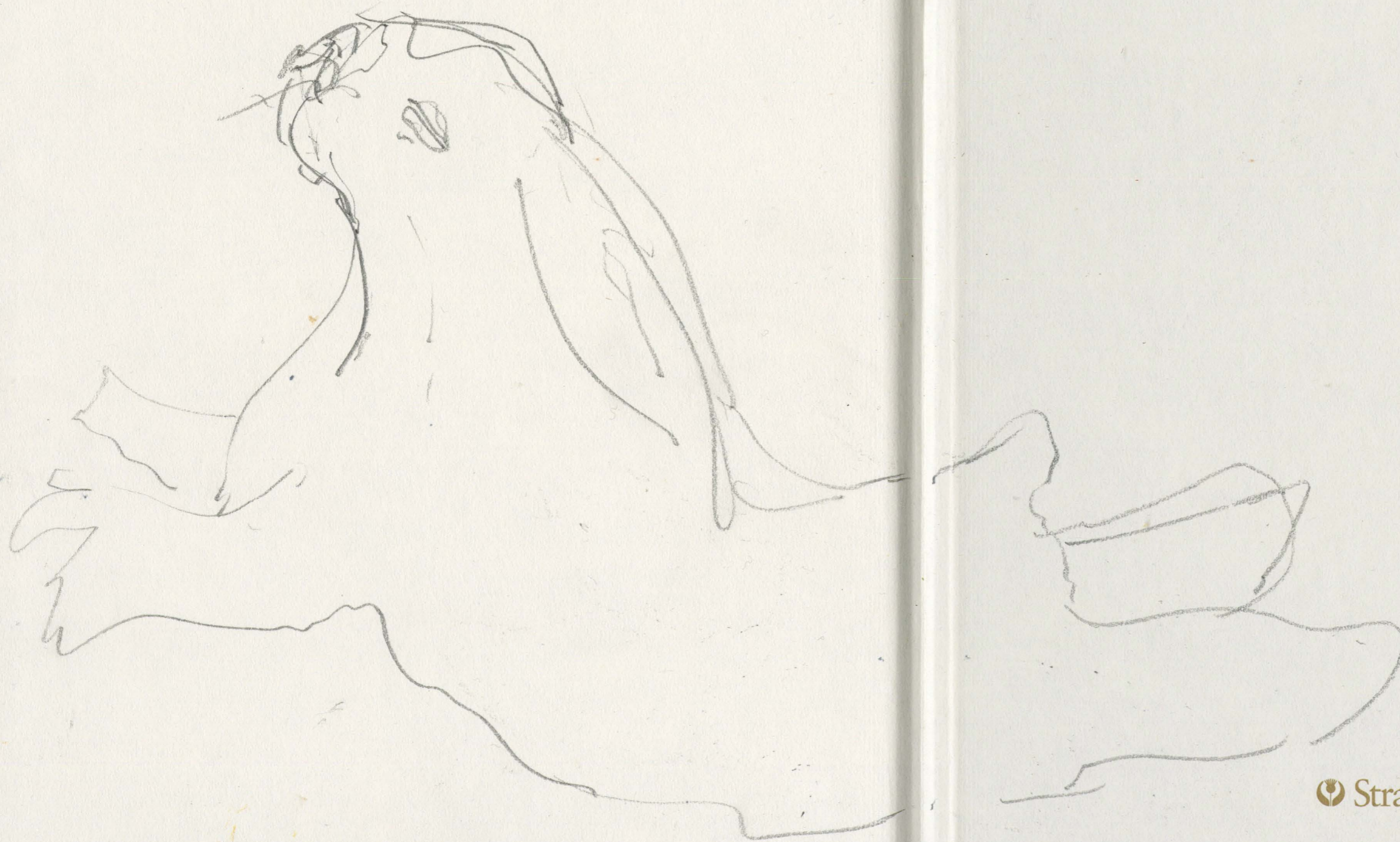




-CHINOGRAPH PENCILS !!



The last page and a dandelion head stares back at me. I was now having a conversation with a form that had come out of my subconscious, but which was now beginning to have an authority all of its own.

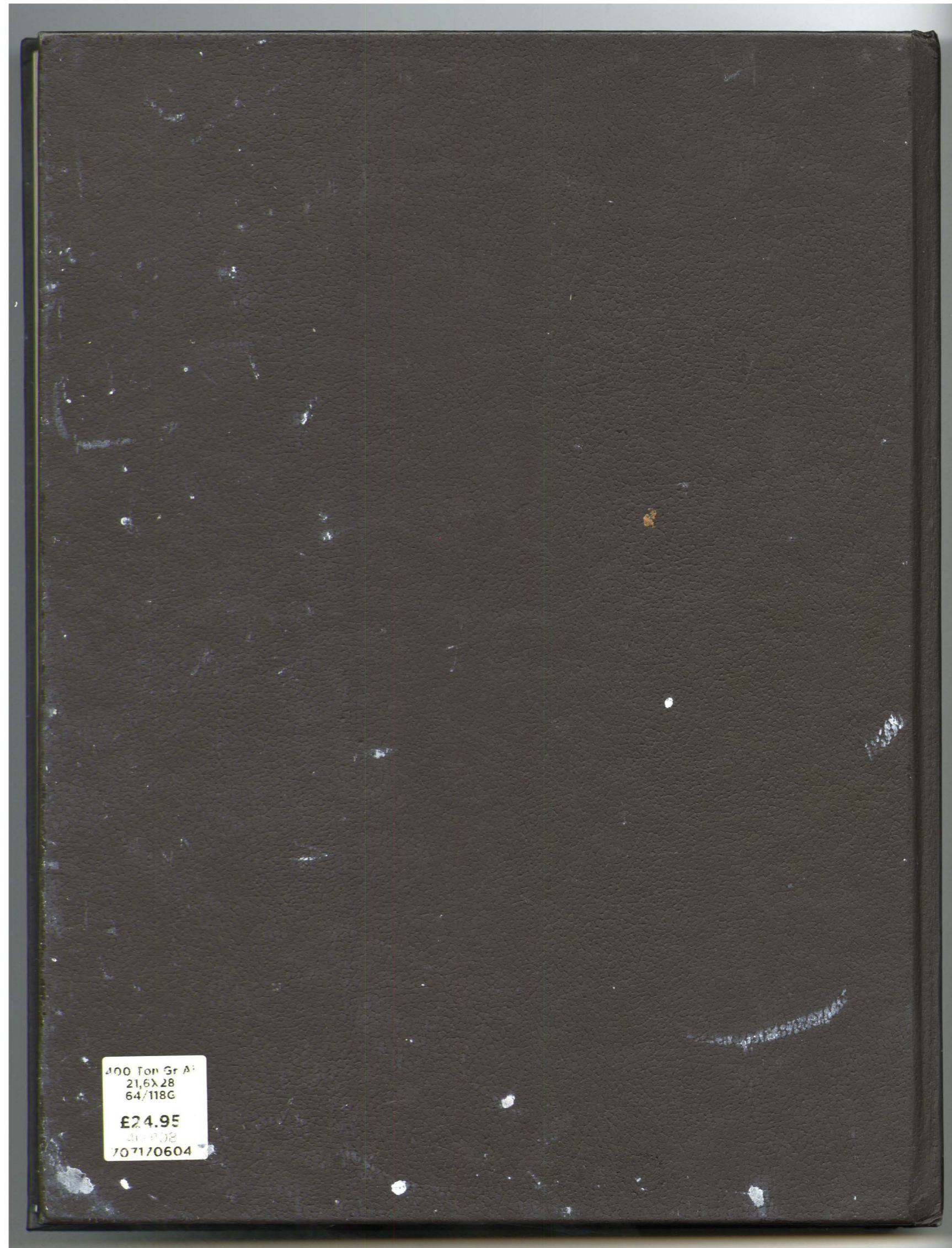


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The final page has a very fast pencil scribble of a rabbit / fish thought. The rabbit / fish was an image that for a while kept emerging as a result of the conversation I had had with an asylum seeker, who told me about his crossing the Mediterranean experience and of hallucinating a swimming rabbit that followed him across the sea. For him it was a good luck charm and he still believed that what he had seen was some sort of protective angel in rabbit form. That angel has since visited me in many guises, from a Godzilla type gigantic form to a shape that threads its way between wave forms and it still occasionally emerges as I'm reminded of the continuing plight of refugees.



One issue I had not thought about as I scanned in sketchbooks was price. I noticed that this one cost £25 and a quick glance at an older one from the mid 1970s when I first started working at the university reveals that it was £2.50. A 10 fold increase over 50 years.